



YOU NEVER CHANGE, DO YOU, OAMA? YOU LET YOUR TONGUE WAG HOWEVER IT WANTS...

BUT I WON'T PLAY YOUR GAME!



I'M WILLING TO WAIT FOR YOU.



AS YOU KNOW... I ALWAYS MAKE MY DECISIONS AFTER CONSULTING THE **BUDDHA**.

AFTER WE MOVED THE CAPITAL, I ORDERED MONK HO BEN TO BURN INCENSE, AND HAD THE HUNT OFFICIALLY **BLESSED BY BUDDHA!!**

THAT'S EVEN WORSE, AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED...



EVERY SECOND WORD YOU UTTER THESE DAYS IS "**BUDDHA**"!

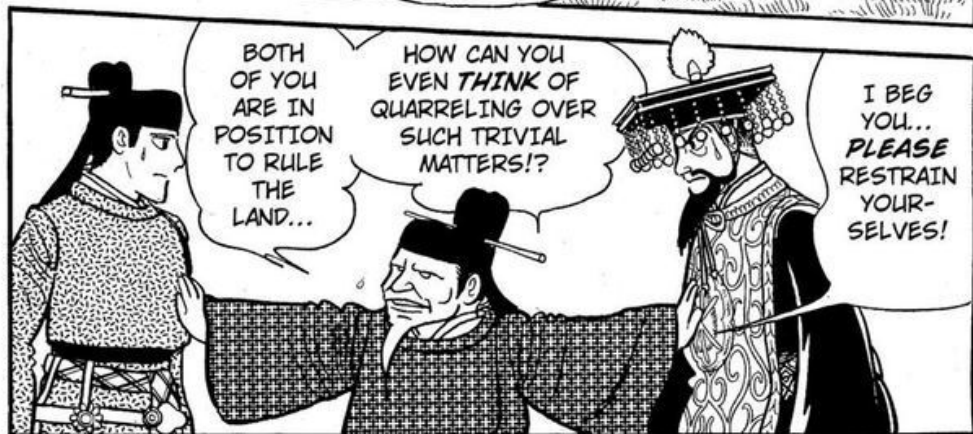
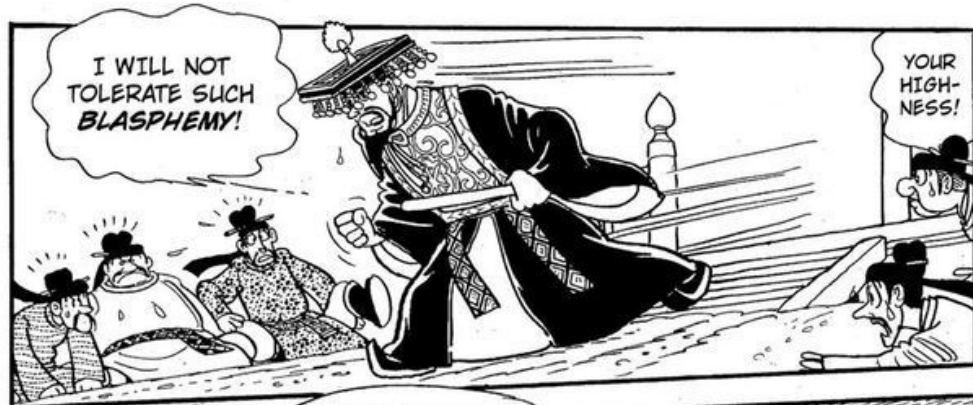
BUT PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS WORSHIPED THE NATIVE GODS, NOT ONLY IN OMI, BUT IN THE PROVINCES TOO!

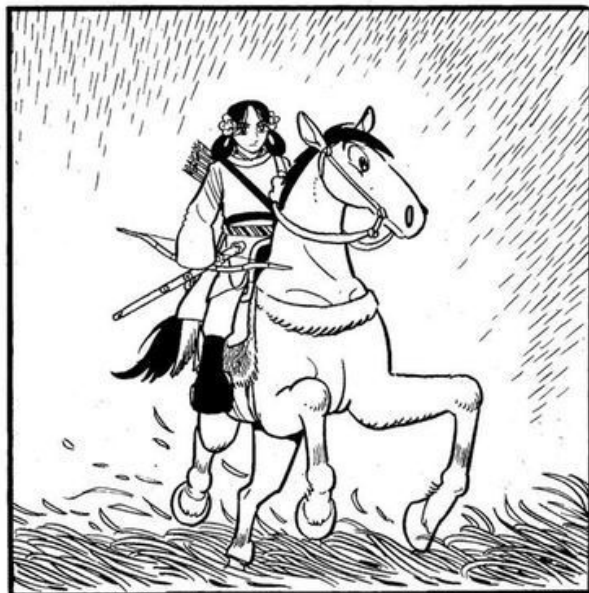


HOW CAN YOU POSSIBLY CLAIM TO BE UNIFYING THE LAND, WHEN YOU IGNORE THE WILL OF THE VILLAGERS? WHAT KIND OF PEACE WILL THAT BRING, MAY I ASK?



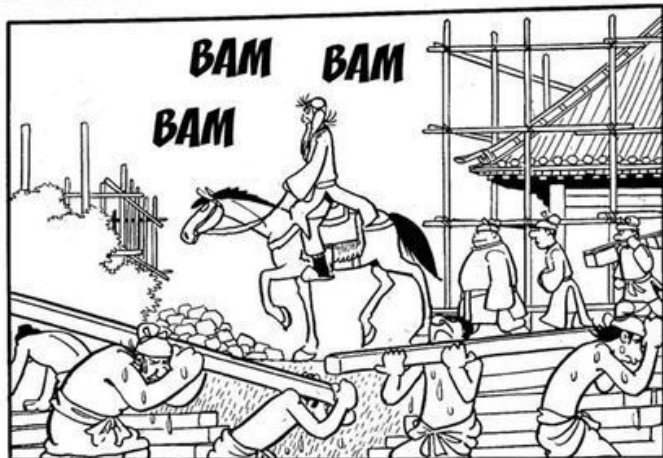
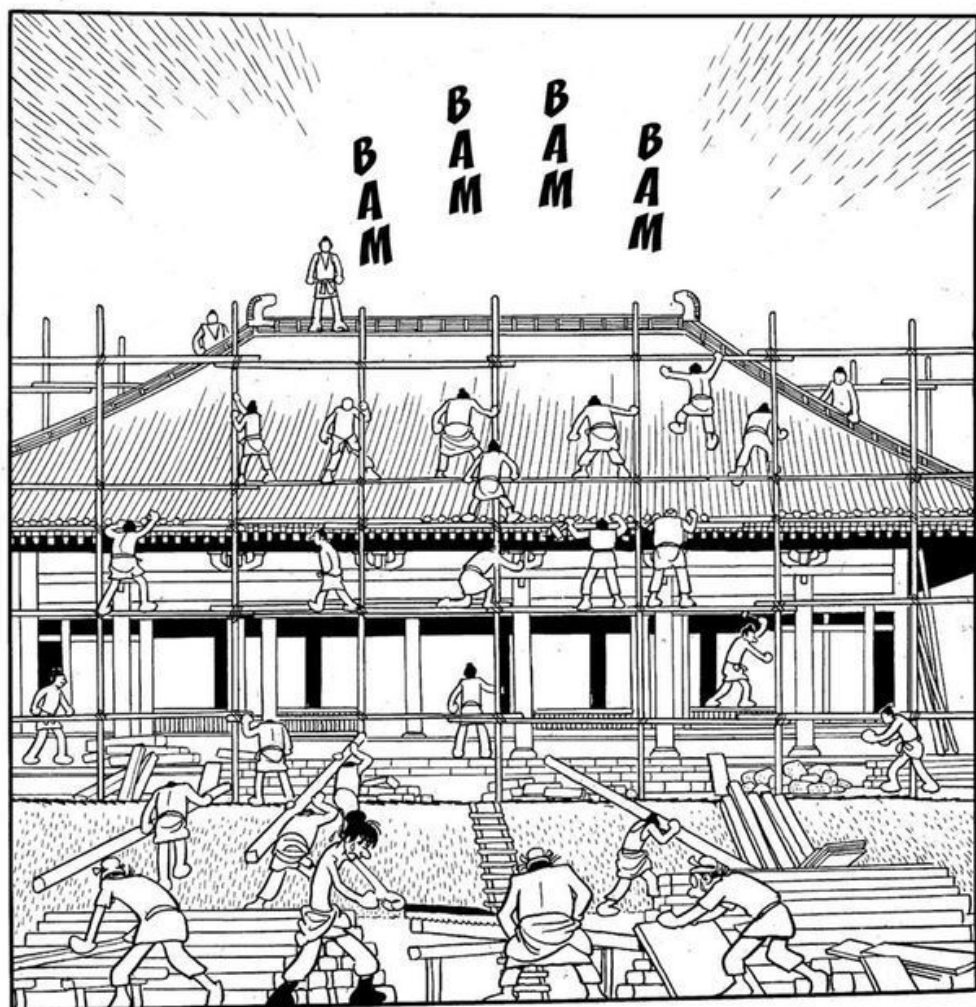
**ENOUGH!**  
I WON'T STAND FOR THIS!

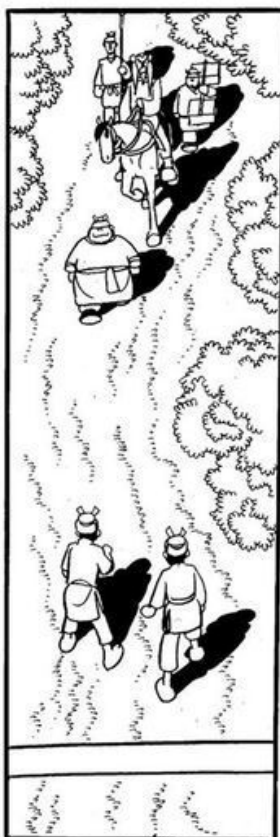


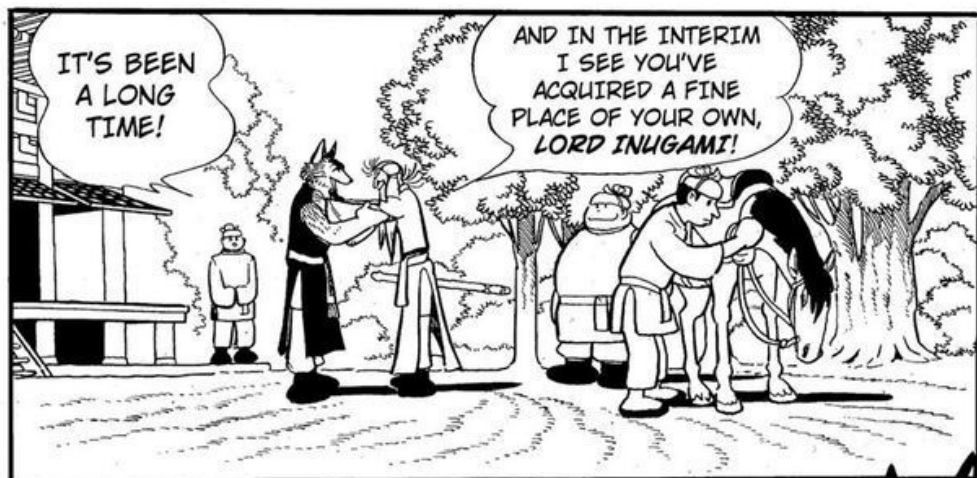


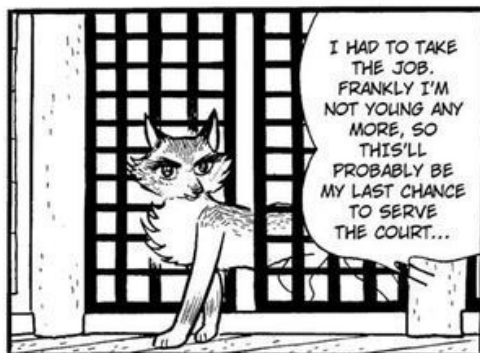






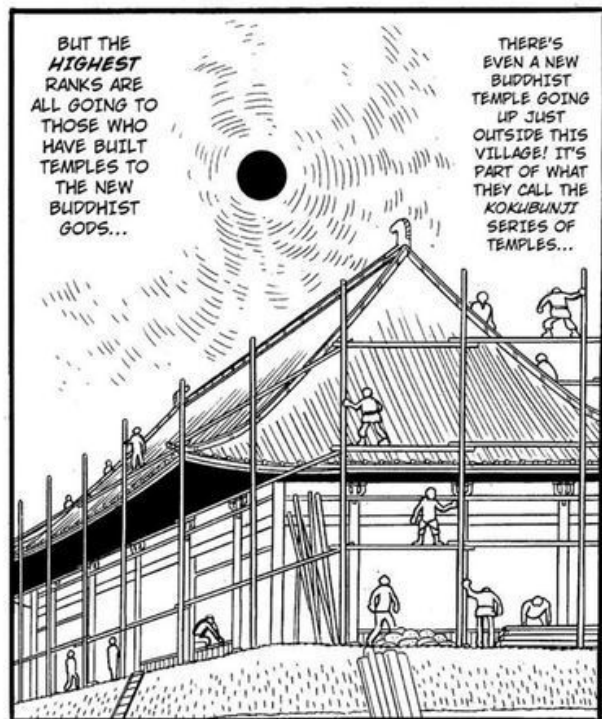
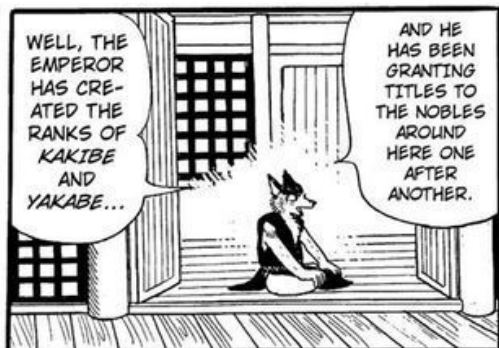


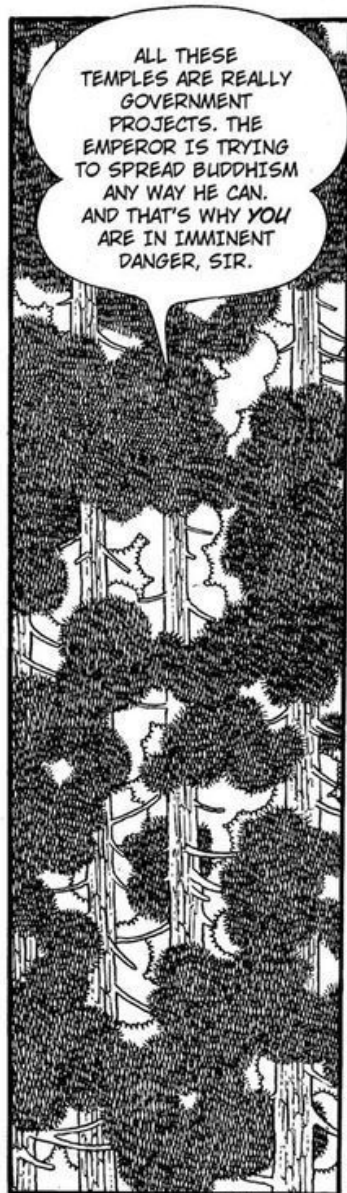


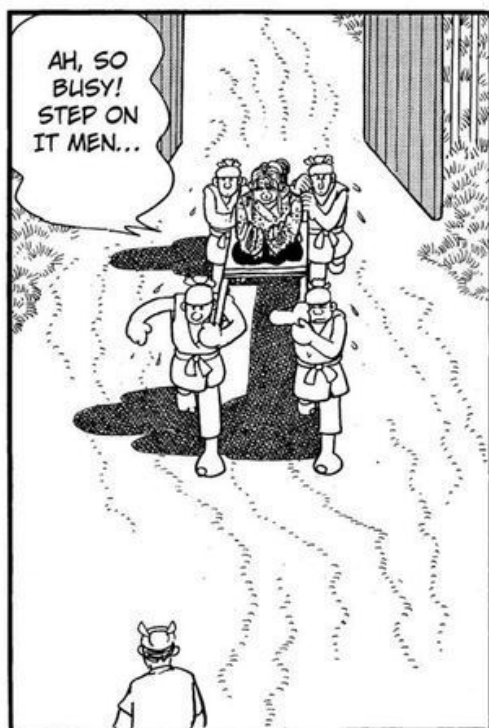
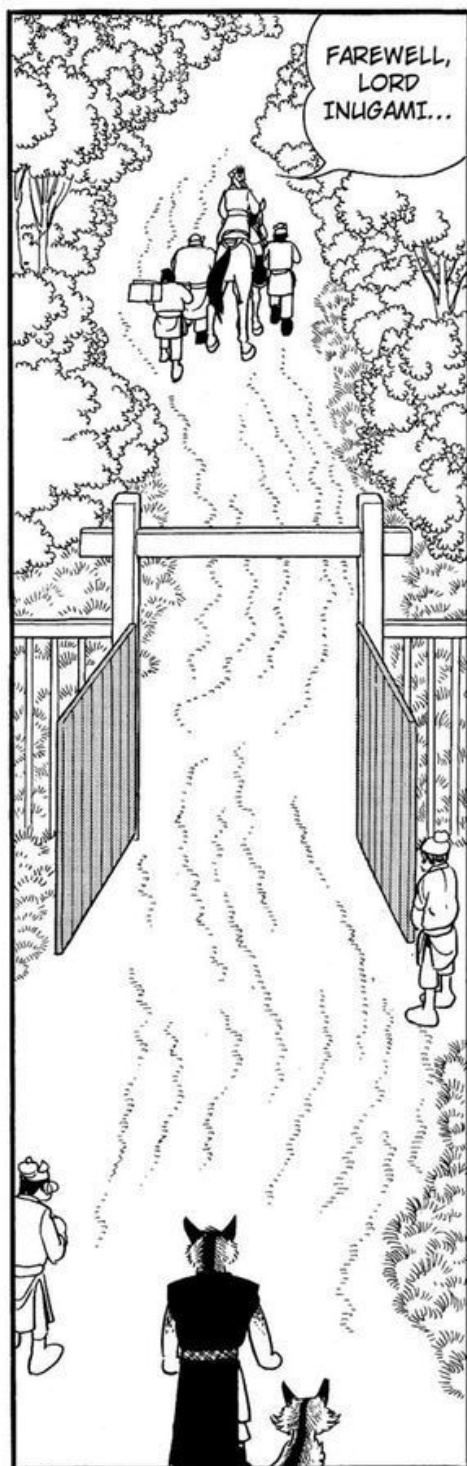




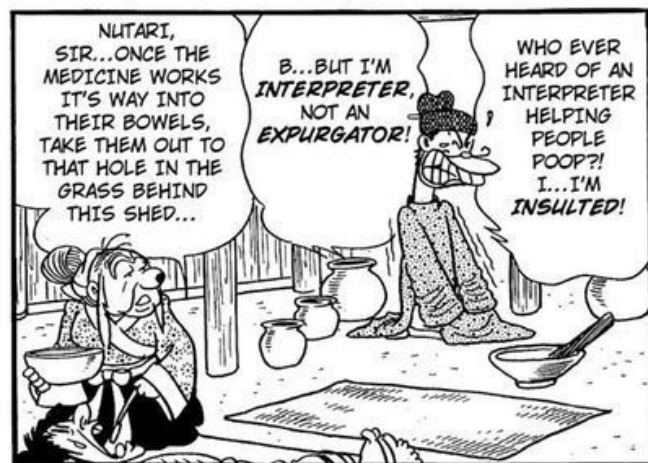
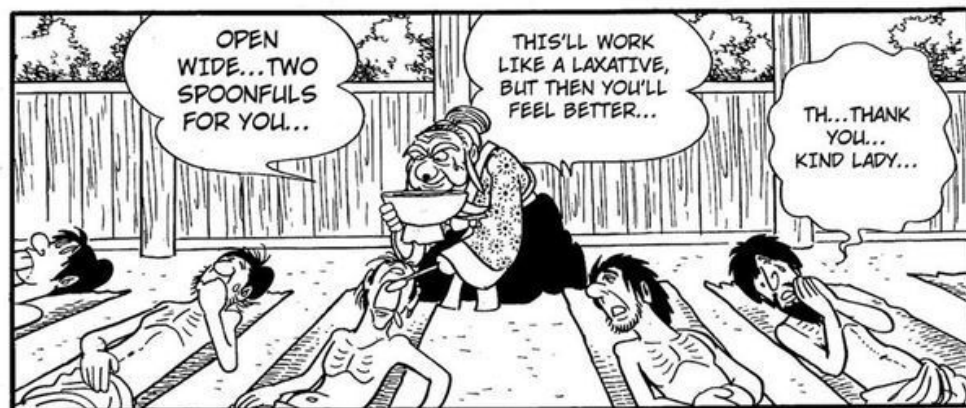






















WHY DO  
YOU  
RUN  
AWAY?!



PLEASE...  
PLEASE DO  
NOT COME  
NEAR ME...



IF I COULD, I  
WOULD LOVE TO  
CHANGE INTO  
HUMAN FORM  
AND HAVE YOU  
HOLD ME...

BUT MANY  
ADVANCE GUARDS OF  
THE BUDDHIST FAITH  
ARE HERE...AND IF THEY  
KNOW THAT I AM THE  
DAUGHTER OF THE  
SPIRIT TRIBE'S  
CHIEF...



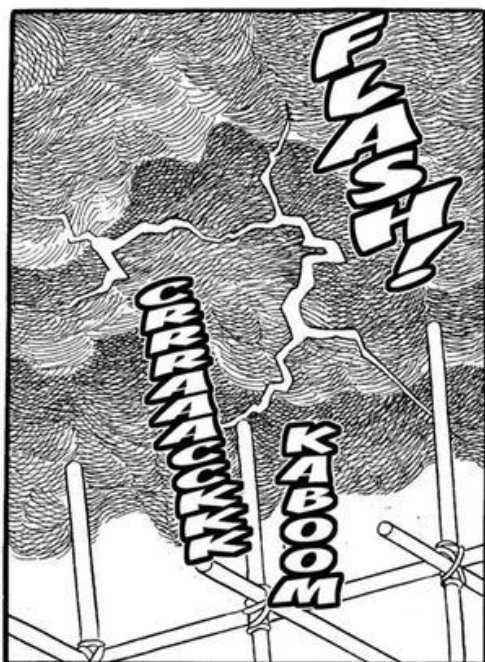
I SEE...  
I SPOKE  
WITHOUT  
THINKING...  
FORGIVE MY  
WEAKNESS

BUT YOU,  
TOO,  
SHOULD  
SPEAK TO  
ME AS  
LITTLE AS  
POSSIBLE,  
MARINO...

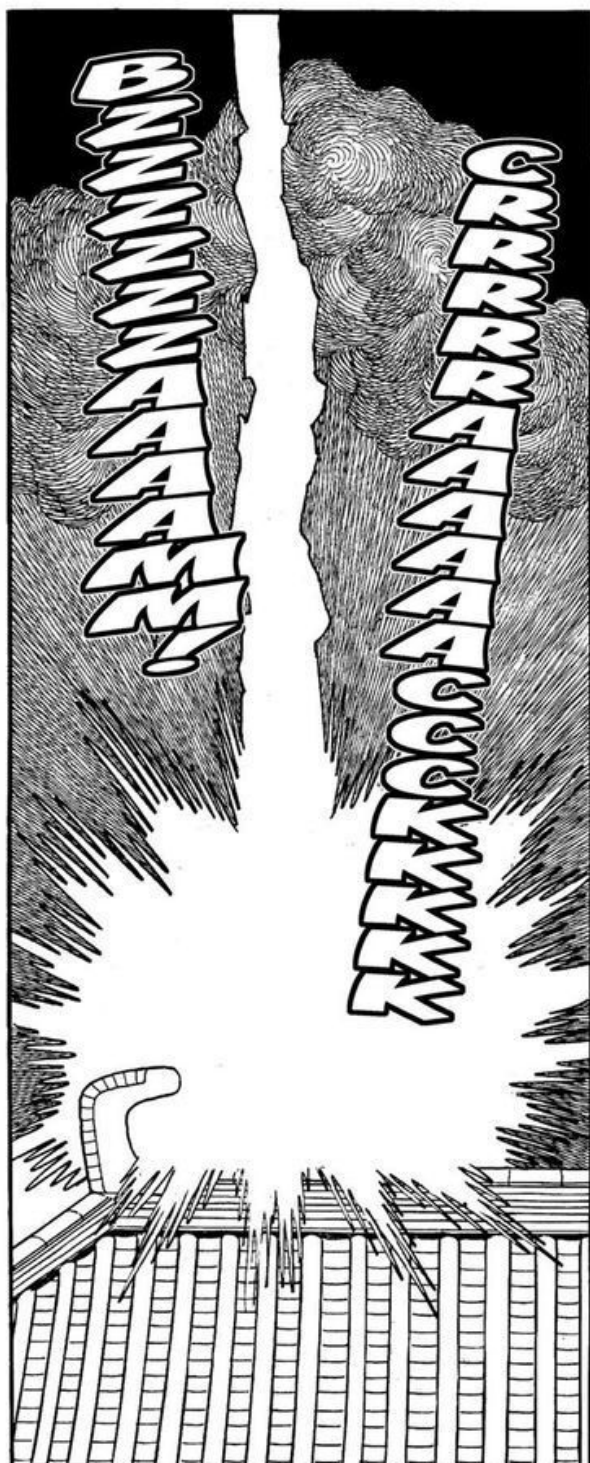


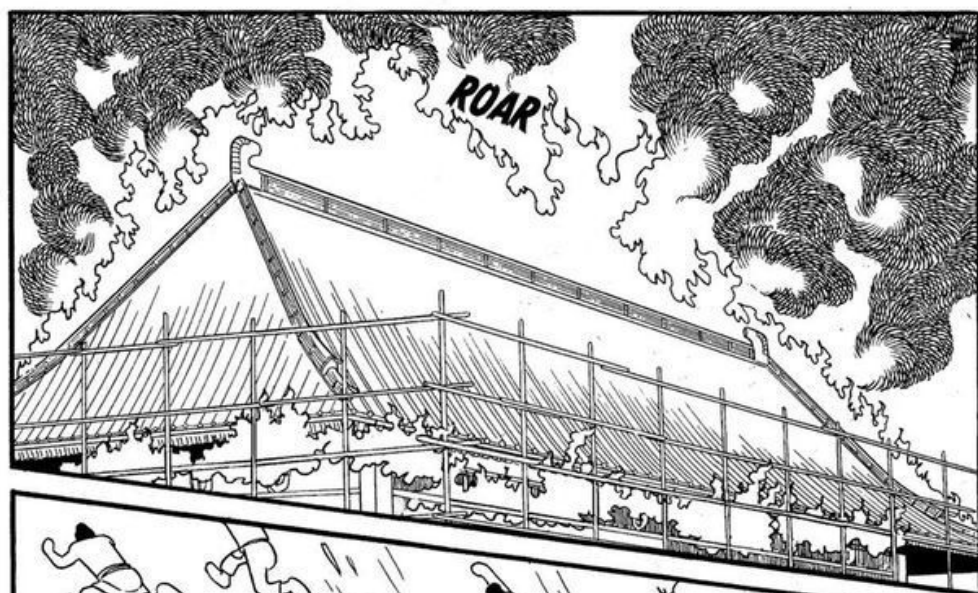
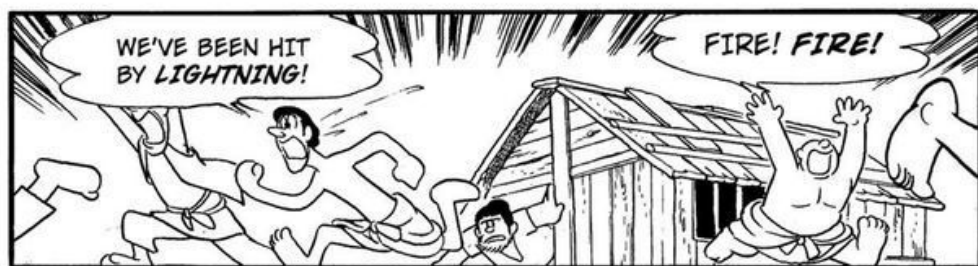
WE MUST BE  
CAREFUL NOT  
TO LET THE  
WORLD KNOW  
ANY OF  
THIS...AT  
LEAST UNTIL  
THINGS SETTLE  
DOWN...







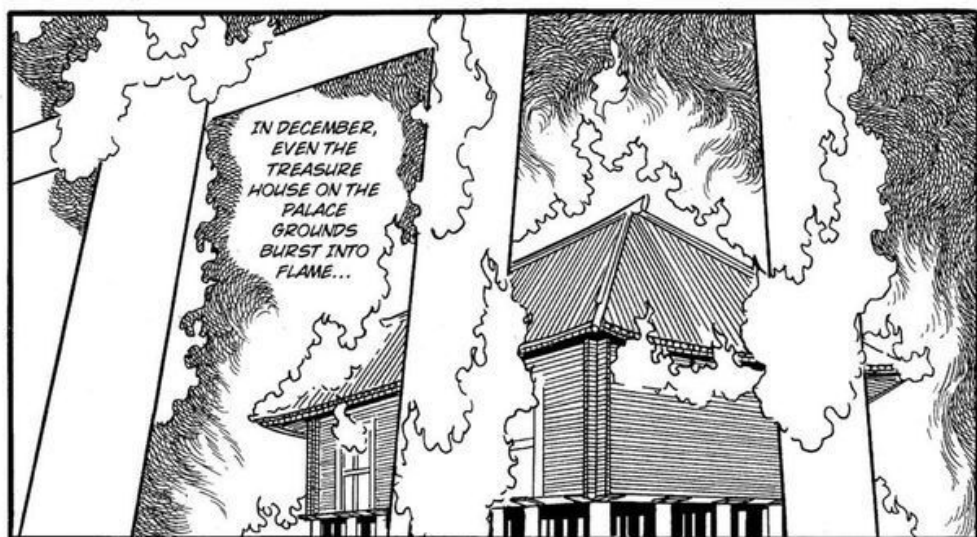






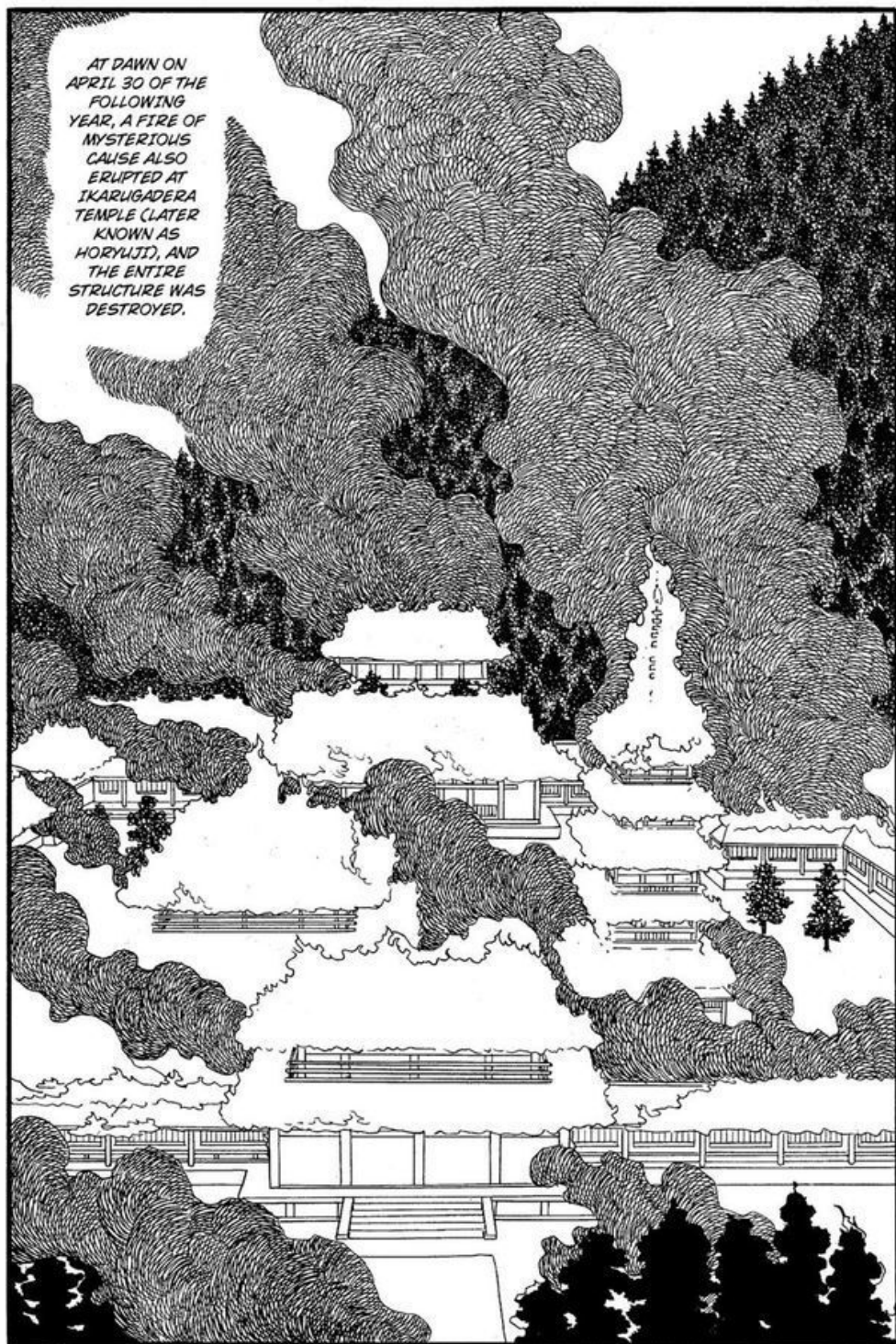
THAT YEAR  
THERE WERE  
LIGHTNING  
STRIKES ALL  
OVER YAMATO,  
AND MANY  
TEMPLES  
BURNED...

...INCLUDING  
MANY OF THE  
KOKUBUNJI,  
OR STATE-  
SPONSORED  
LOCAL TEMPLES...



IN DECEMBER,  
EVEN THE  
TREASURE  
HOUSE ON THE  
PALACE  
GROUNDS  
BURST INTO  
FLAME...

AT DAWN ON  
APRIL 30 OF THE  
FOLLOWING  
YEAR, A FIRE OF  
MYSTERIOUS  
CAUSE ALSO  
ERUPTED AT  
IKARUGADERA  
TEMPLE (LATER  
KNOWN AS  
HORYUJI), AND  
THE ENTIRE  
STRUCTURE WAS  
DESTROYED.

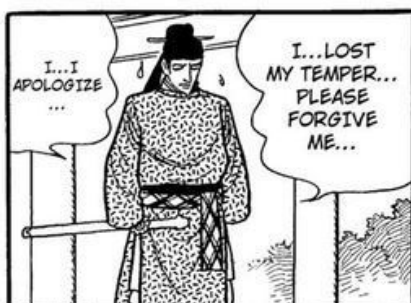


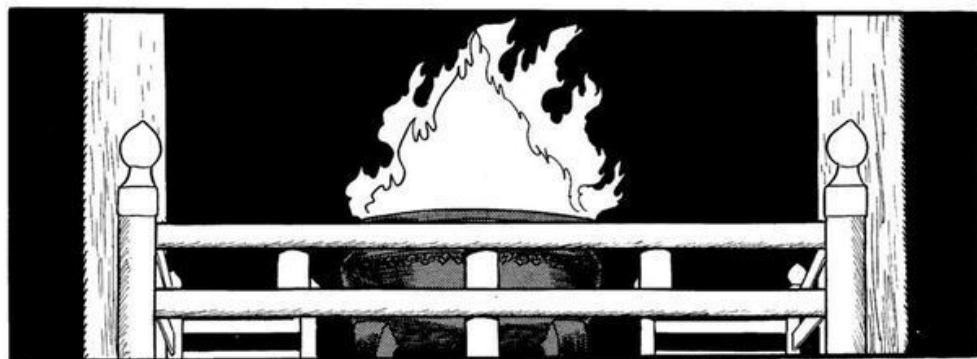






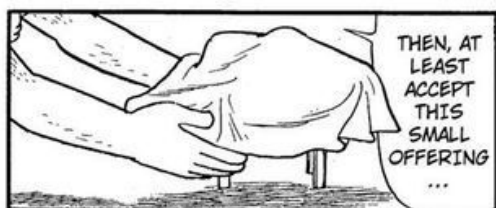
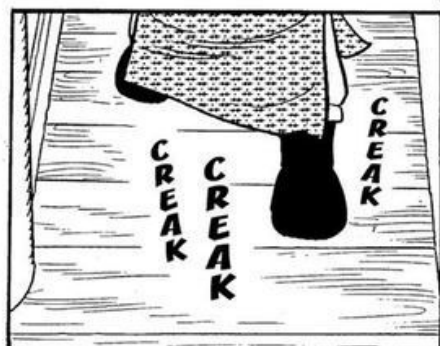
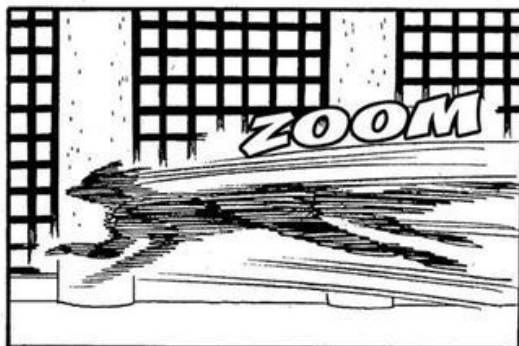








\*NAMU SHAKA MU NI BUTSU

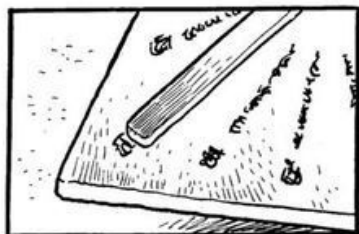
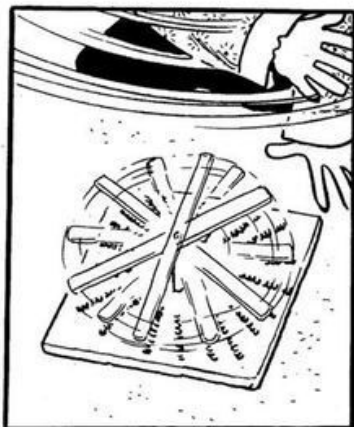
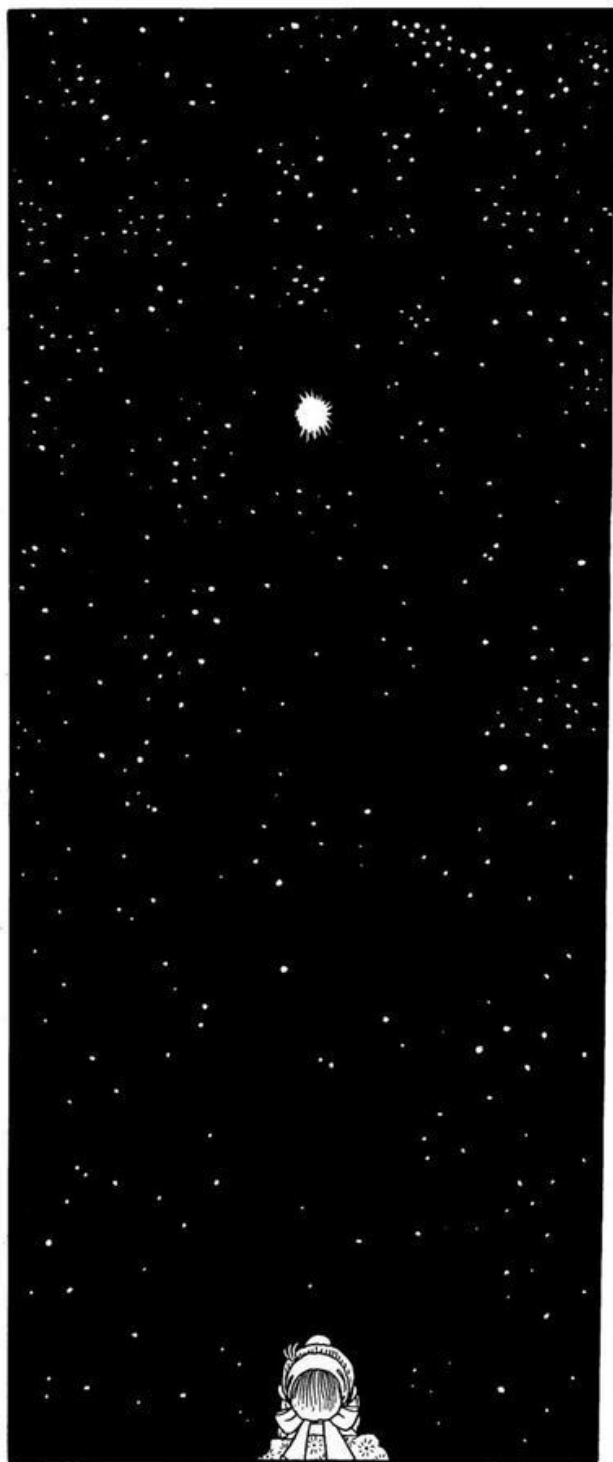


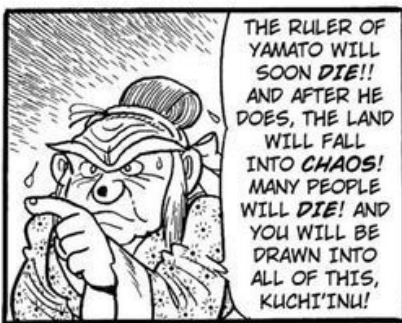
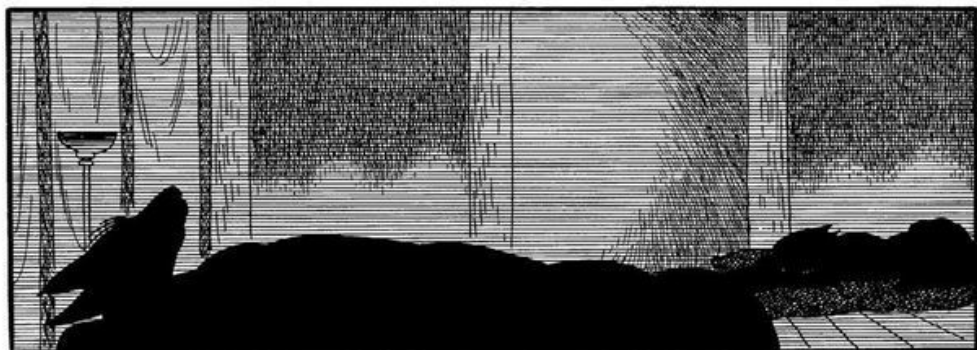


















\*KUSHITSUSHUSHIN WAS AN INTELLECTUAL AND SCHOLAR WHO HAD IMMIGRATED TO YAMATO FROM THE BAEKJE KINGDOM









THERE'S NO POINT  
IN MAKING THINGS  
ANY WORSE RIGHT  
NOW...

PERHAPS THE SMART  
THING FOR ME TO DO  
NOW IS TO ALLAY MY  
BROTHER'S FEARS BY  
ACTUALLY SHAVING MY  
HEAD AND *BECOMING*  
A MONK...

I KNEW  
YOU'D THINK  
OF SOME-  
THING,

AS A MONK,  
YOU CAN  
SHAVE YOUR  
HEAD AND  
STILL KEEP  
YOUR SCALP!  
HEH HEH.

HELLO,  
MOTHER.

THIS IS  
NO TIME  
FOR BAD  
JOKES,  
YASUMARO.

HMPH!  
A  
MONK!

IT MAKES  
ME SICK  
JUST TO  
THINK OF  
SHAVING  
MY HEAD!

WELL, IF IT  
ISN'T MY DEAR SON,  
PRINCE OTOMO.  
AND HOW IS HIS  
MAJESTY, YOUR  
FATHER, FEELING  
TODAY?















WE  
KNOW...

AND YOU  
MUST  
NOT  
STOP!

NEVER  
STOP!!



I WON'T! I  
PROMISE!  
I PROMISE!

PRINCE  
OTOMO!



WHAT'S  
THE  
MATTER,  
MY  
SON?



DID YOU  
HAVE A  
BAD  
DREAM?

YES...  
IT WAS  
**TERR-  
IBLE!**



WHAT'S  
THAT YOU  
HAVE IN  
YOUR  
HAND?

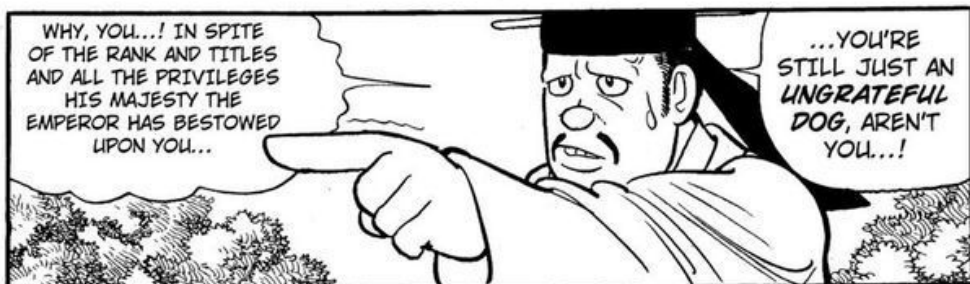


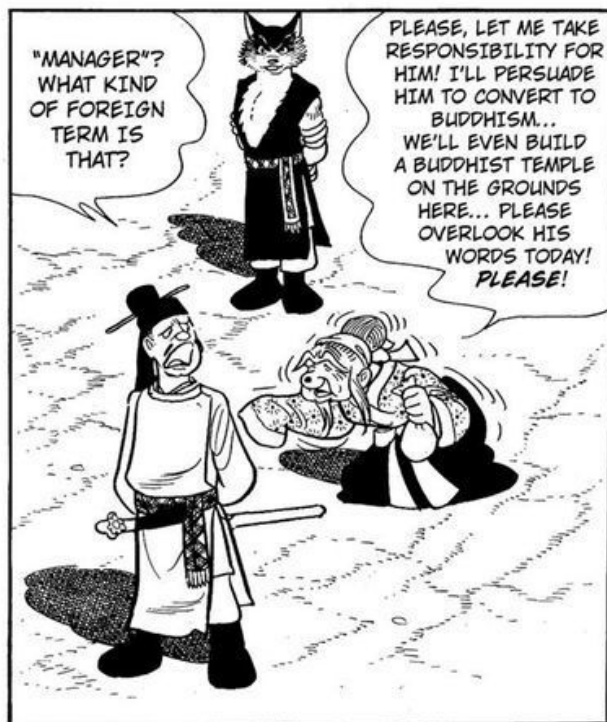
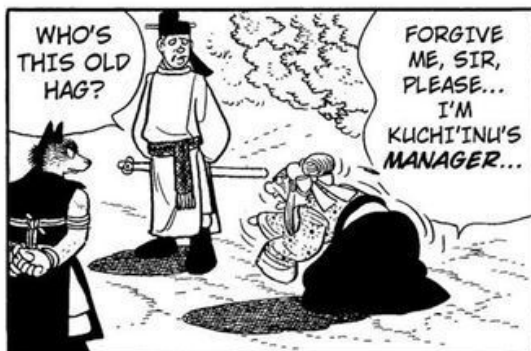
IT'S A STATUE OF  
THE BUDDHA!!

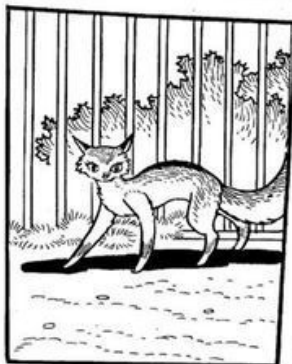
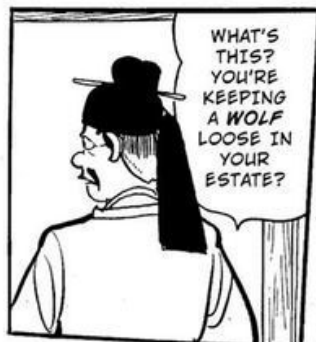
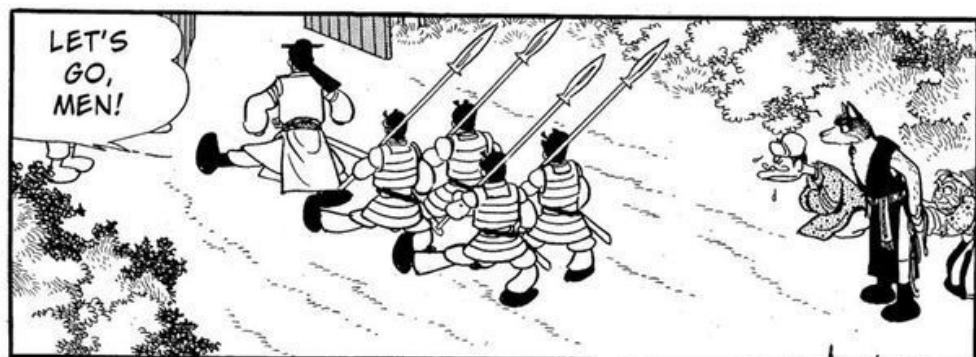


I CAN'T  
BELIEVE IT...  
THAT WAS  
**NO DREAM...**  
THE BUDDHA  
WAS **HERE...!**

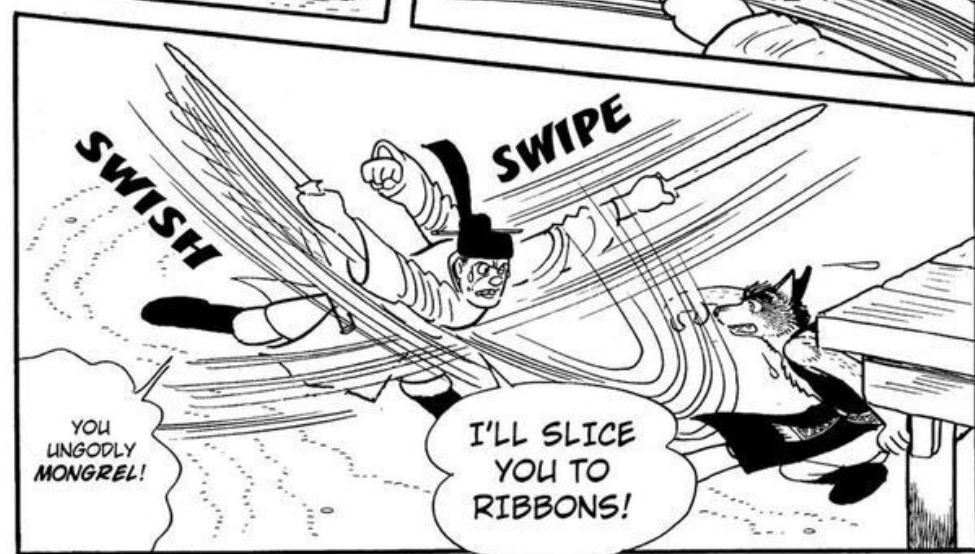
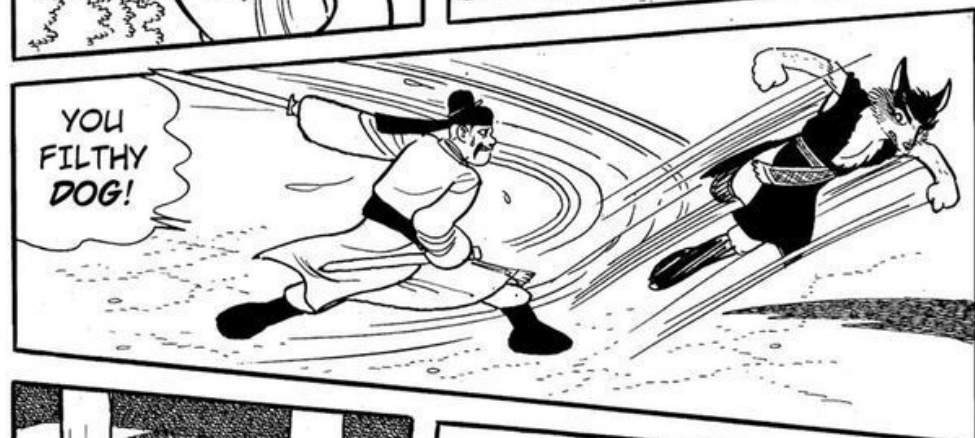
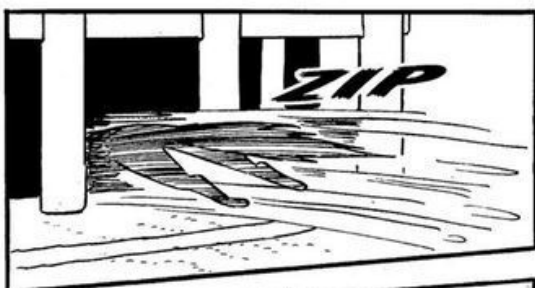


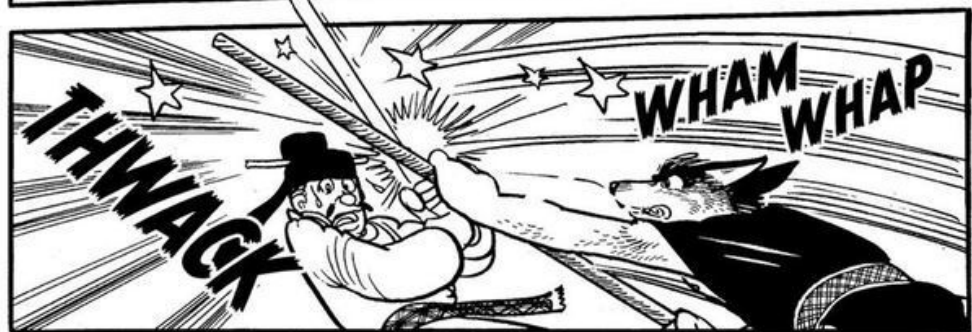
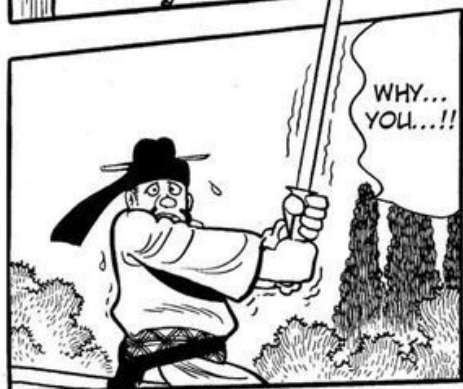


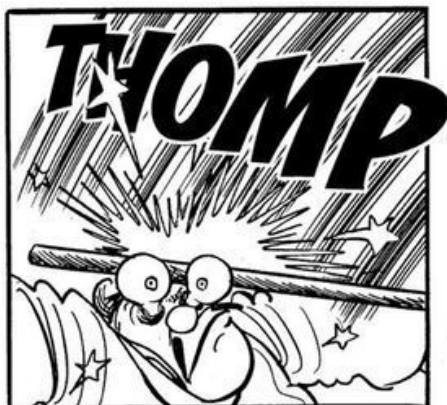




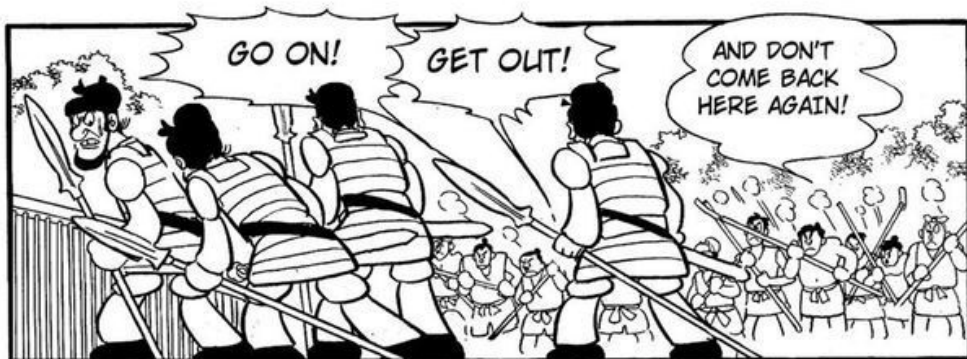






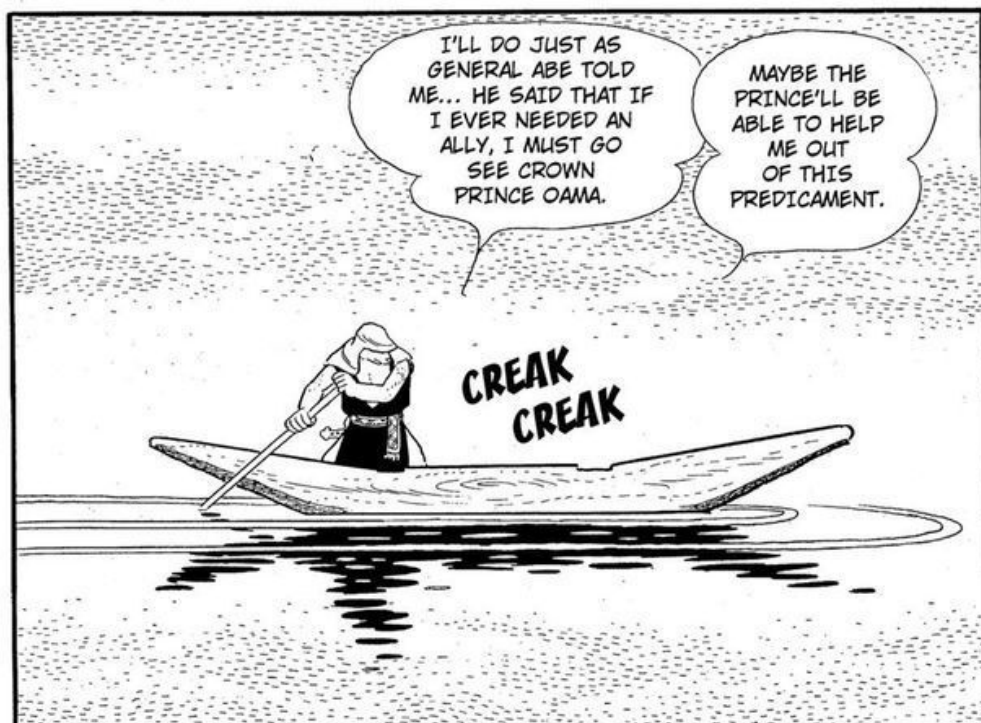






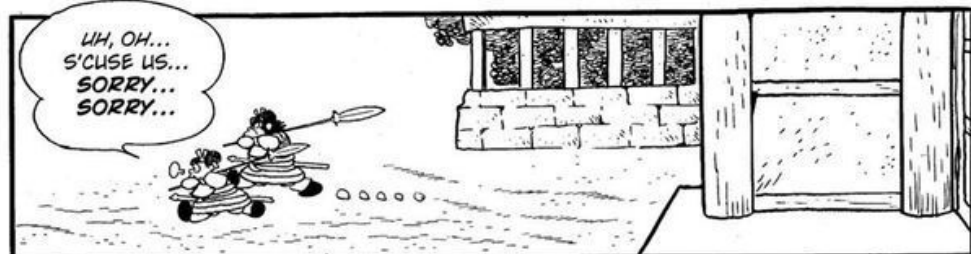




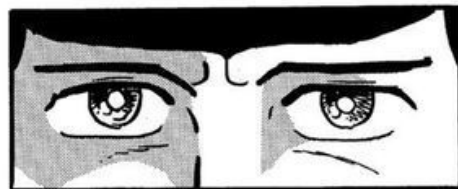


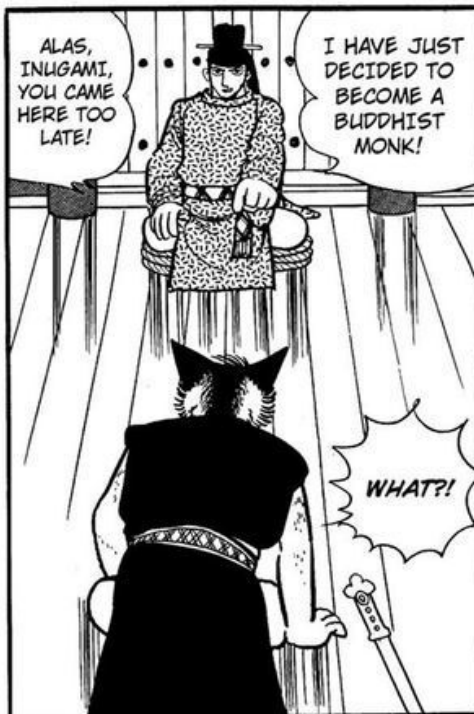




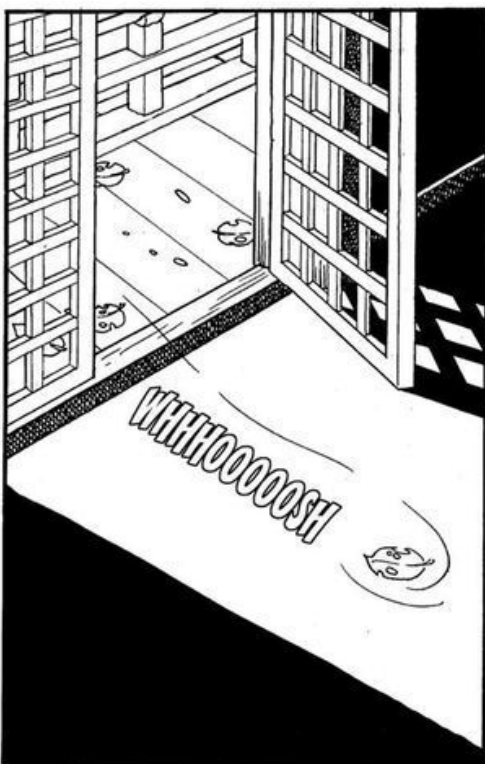
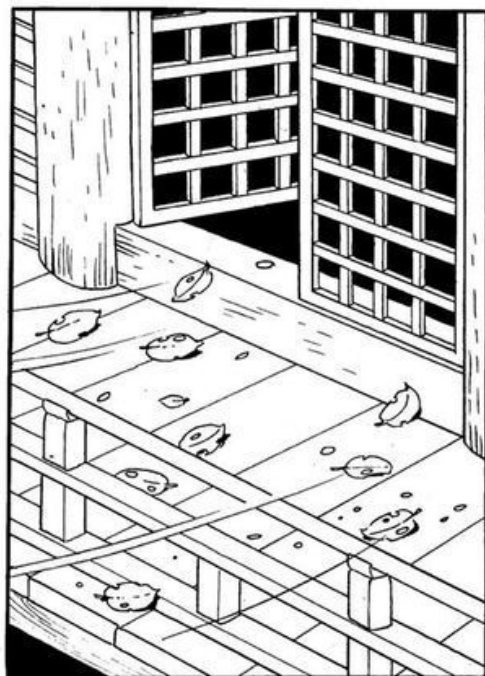
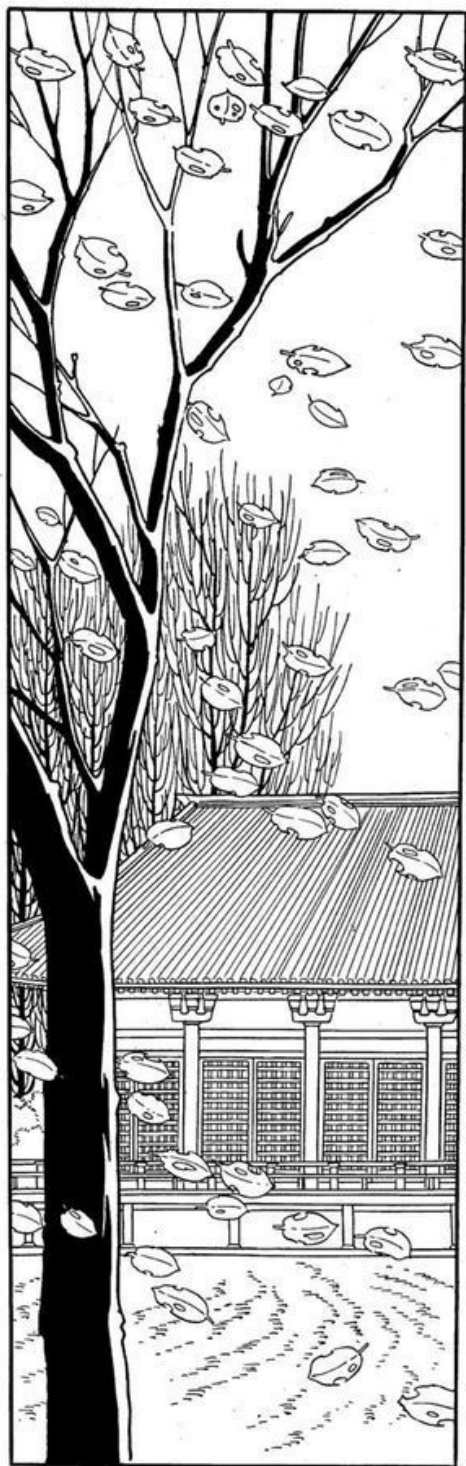


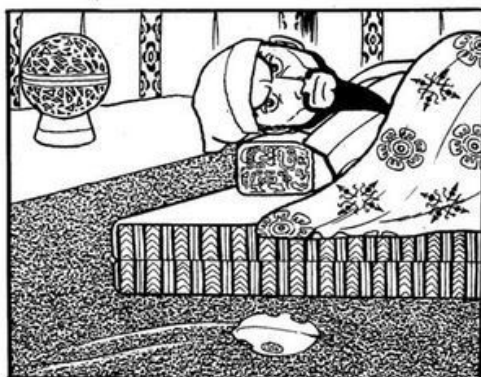






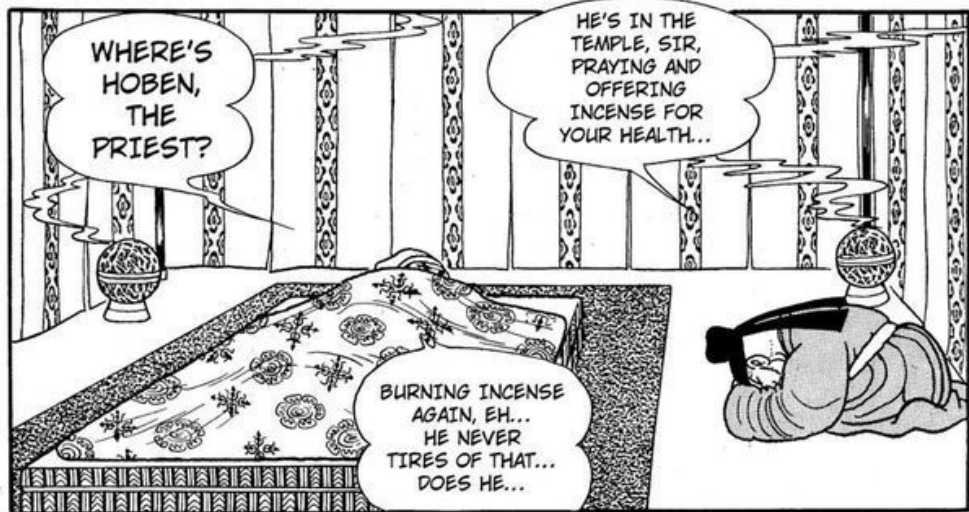






WINTER  
ALREADY...?

I PROBABLY  
WON'T LAST  
TO SEE  
SPRING...



WHERE'S  
HOBEN,  
THE  
PRIEST?

HE'S IN THE  
TEMPLE, SIR,  
PRAYING AND  
OFFERING  
INCENSE FOR  
YOUR HEALTH...

BURNING INCENSE  
AGAIN, EH...  
HE NEVER  
TIRES OF THAT...  
DOES HE...



THE WHOLE PLACE  
IS STARTING TO REEK  
OF INCENSE...

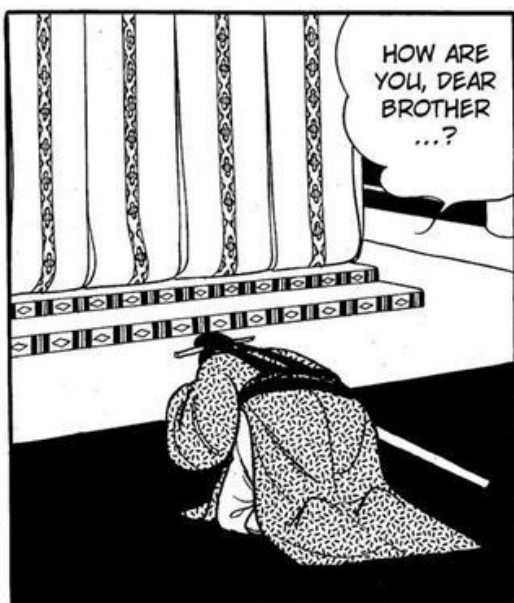
BUT I DOUBT  
IF ANY AMOUNT  
OF PRAYER  
WILL HELP ME  
THIS TIME...

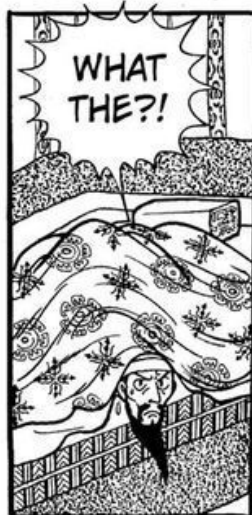


AGHHH...

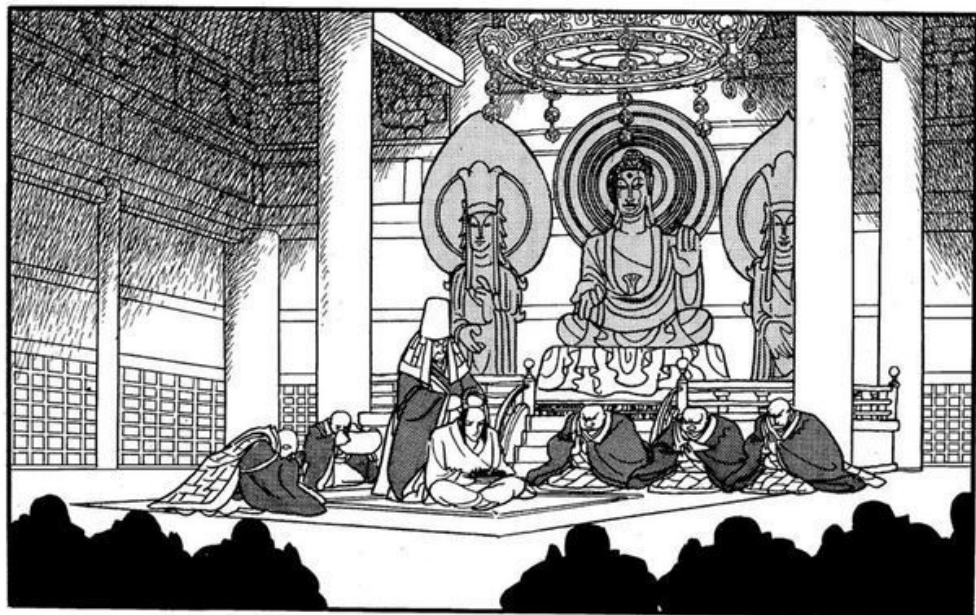




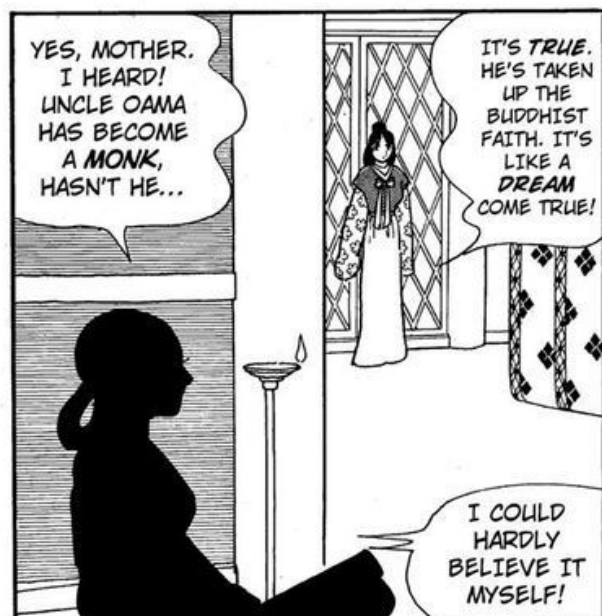


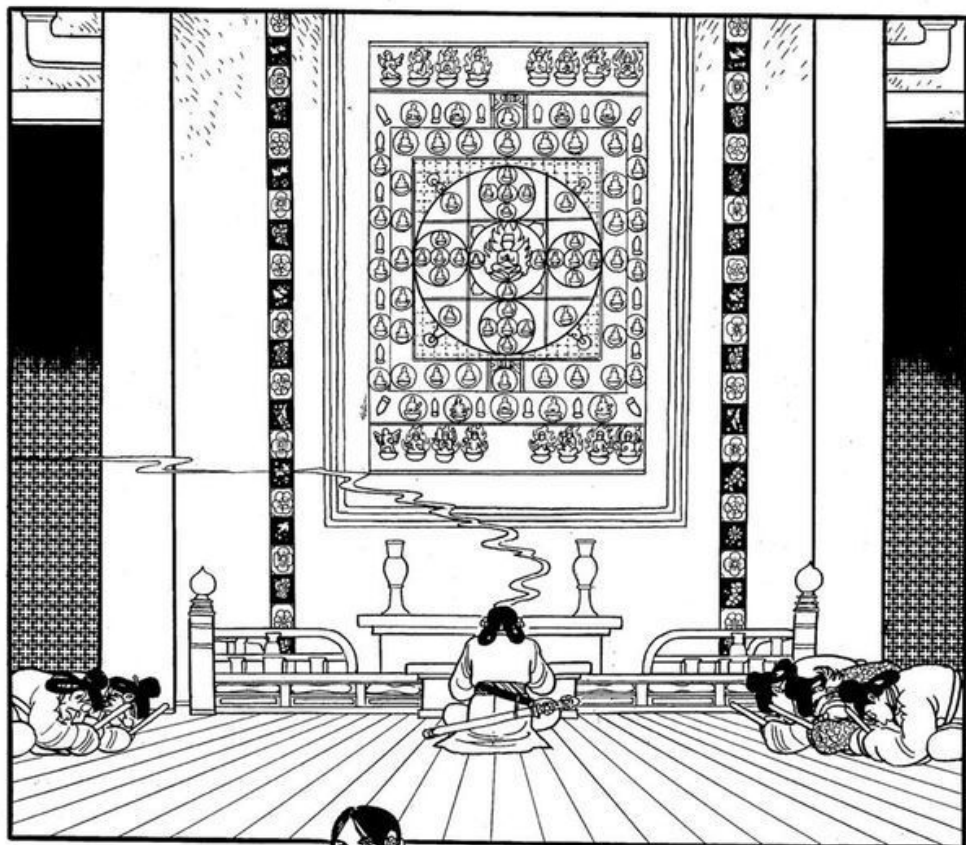










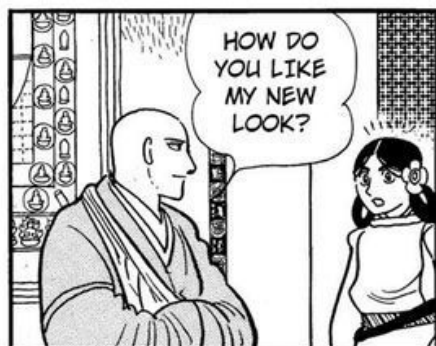


...WE SIX PEOPLE HERE TODAY WILL  
BE OF ONE HEART AS WE RULE THIS  
LAND! SHOULD ANY OF US BREAK OUR  
OATH, WE WILL SURELY FEEL THE PAIN  
OF THE BUDDHA'S PUNISHMENT.

THE FIVE OF US SWEAR TO  
ALWAYS CARRY OUT YOUR  
HIGHNESS' COMMANDS.  
SHOULD WE EVER BREAK OUR  
OATH, WE FULLY EXPECT TO  
INCUR THE WRATH OF ALL THE  
DEITIES IN HEAVEN AND ON  
EARTH, AND FOR OUR  
FAMILIES AND OUR  
DESCENDANTS TO BE  
EXTINGUISHED...

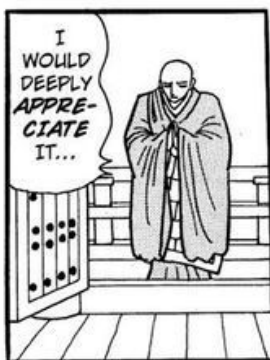








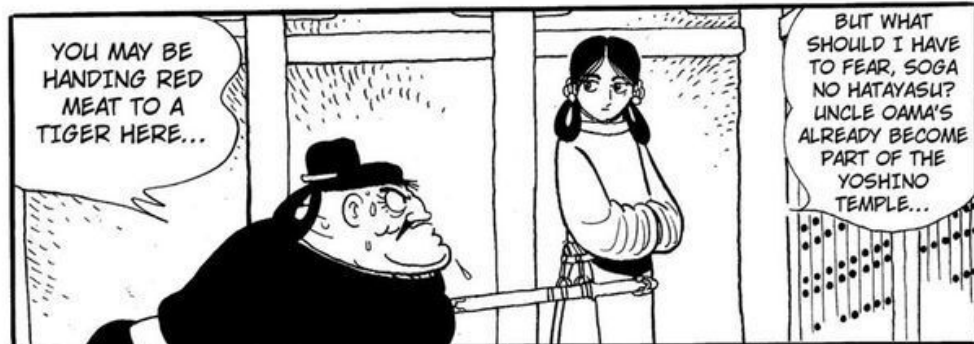
INUGAMI,  
YOU SAY?  
WELL, IF  
YOU WISH  
CLEMENCY  
FOR HIM,  
UNCLE  
OAMA, I'LL  
GRANT IT.



I  
WOULD  
DEEPLY  
APPRE-  
CIATE  
IT...

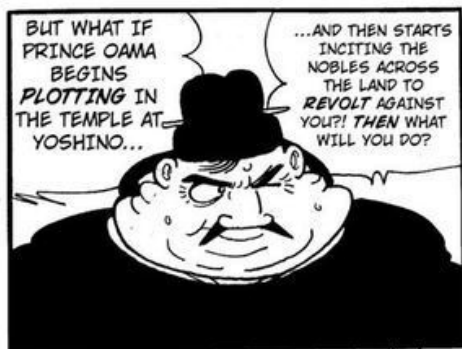


YOU MUST  
BE CAREFUL,  
PRINCE  
OTOMO...



YOU MAY BE  
HANDING RED  
MEAT TO A  
TIGER HERE...

BUT WHAT  
SHOULD I HAVE  
TO FEAR, SOGA  
NO HATAYASU?  
UNCLE OAMA'S  
ALREADY BECOME  
PART OF THE  
YOSHINO  
TEMPLE...



BUT WHAT IF  
PRINCE OAMA  
BEGINS  
PLOTING IN  
THE TEMPLE AT  
YOSHINO...

...AND THEN STARTS  
INCITING THE  
NOBLES ACROSS  
THE LAND TO  
REVOLT AGAINST  
YOU?! THEN WHAT  
WILL YOU DO?



REMEMBER TO KEEP  
THE YOSHINO TEMPLE  
UNDER SURVEILLANCE,  
LORD AKAÉ... I INTEND  
TO USE MY AUTHORITY  
TO CUT OFF FOOD  
SUPPLIES TO THEM!

ISN'T THAT  
GOING A BIT  
TOO FAR, LORD  
HATAYASU?

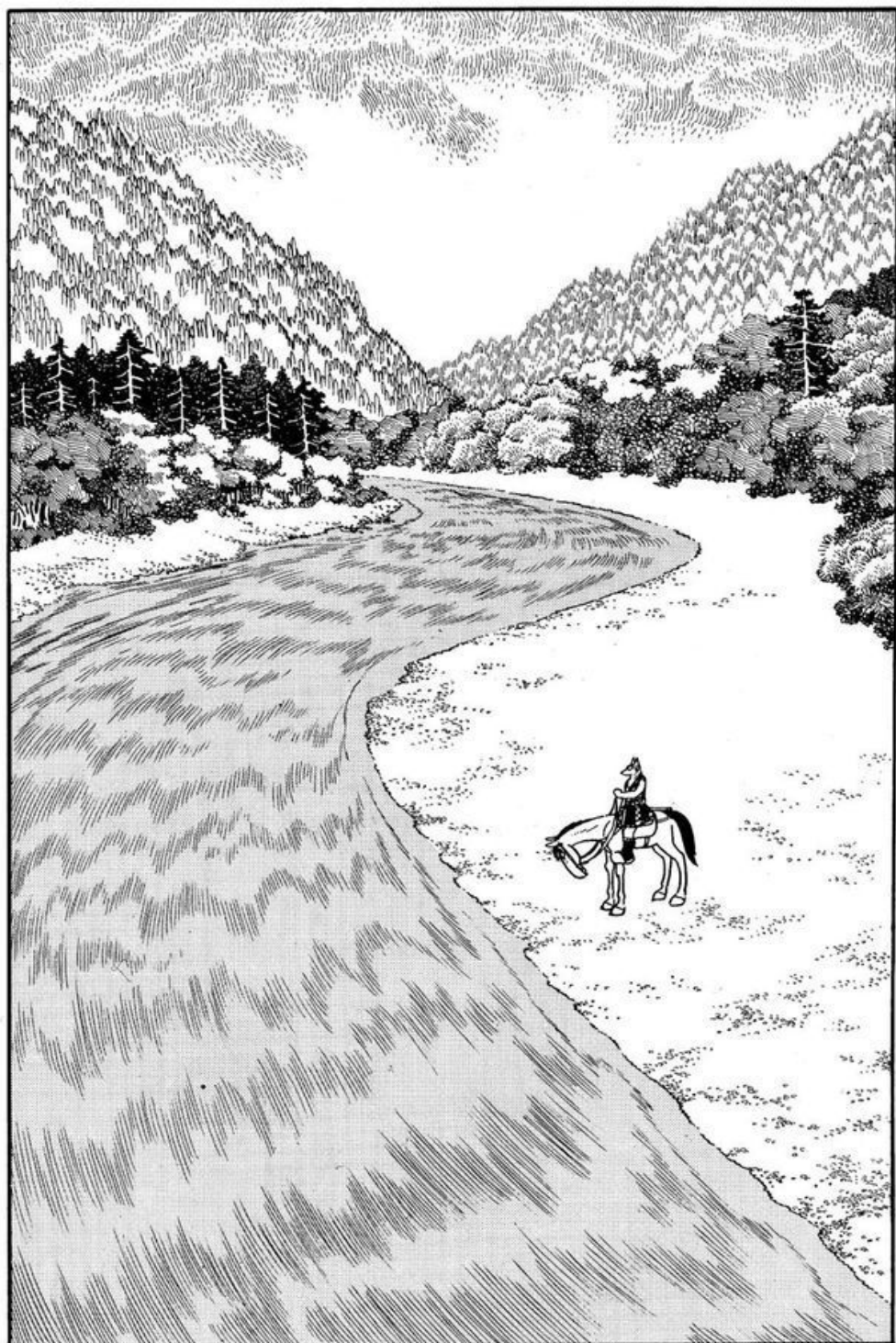


HATAYASU!  
IT ALMOST  
SOUNDS AS  
IF YOU  
DON'T  
TRUST  
UNCLE  
OAMA!

I DON'T  
TRUST  
HIM!

IT'S FOR THE  
SAKE OF PEACE  
IN THE CAPITAL  
HERE AT OMI...  
HEH HEH...





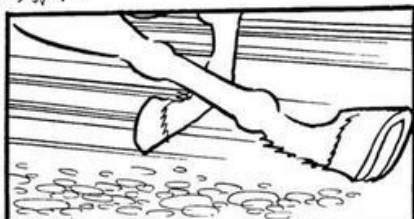


STOP!  
HOLD  
UP!



WAIT!!

WAIT  
UP!



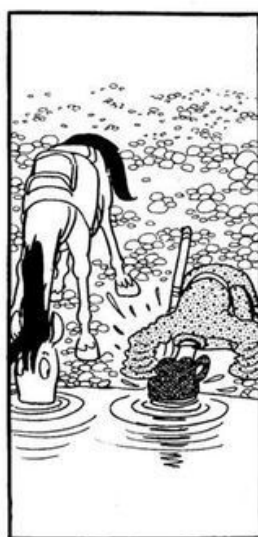
I'VE GOT  
SOME  
FUHO!

...AND  
TRANSLATED INTO  
ENGLISH THAT  
MEANS "BAD  
NEWS"!

WHAT  
ARE YOU  
TALKING  
ABOUT,  
NUTARI?

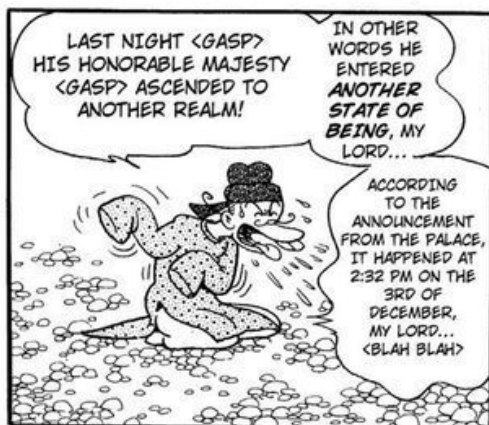


SOME  
WATER  
FIRST!!



<GULP>  
<GULP>  
<HACK>  
<GAG>

YOU  
NEVER  
CHANGE,  
DO  
YOU,  
NUTARI...



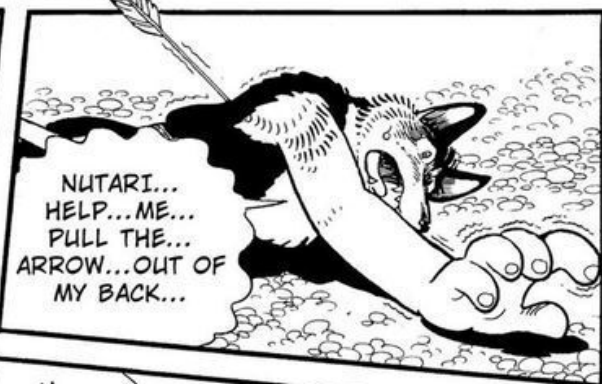


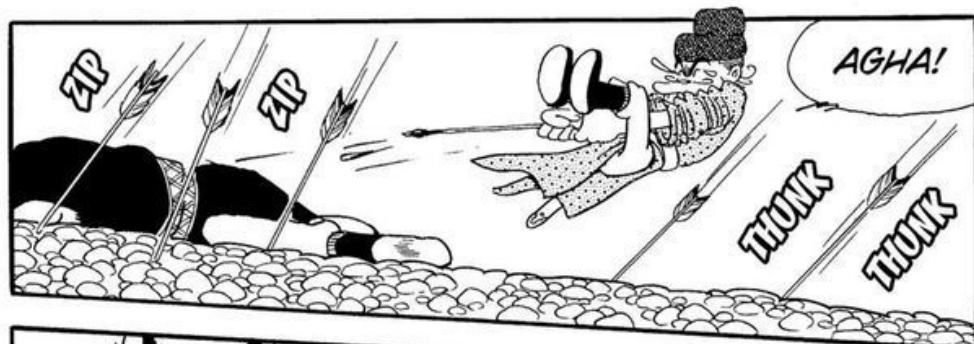
THAT'S RIGHT, SIR, AND  
ACCORDING TO THIS  
PROCLAMATION IT'S DUE TO  
THE MERCY OF THE YOUNG  
PRINCE OTOMO, WHO RULES  
THROUGH A REGENT!



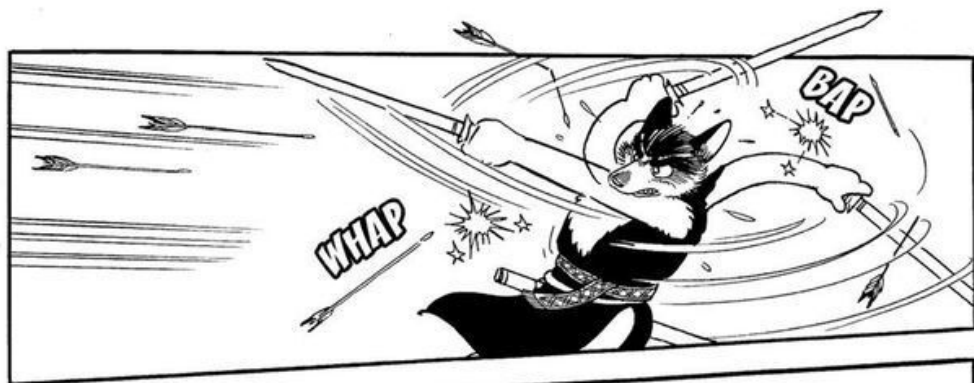
SIGN: (COMPLETELY INNOCENT)

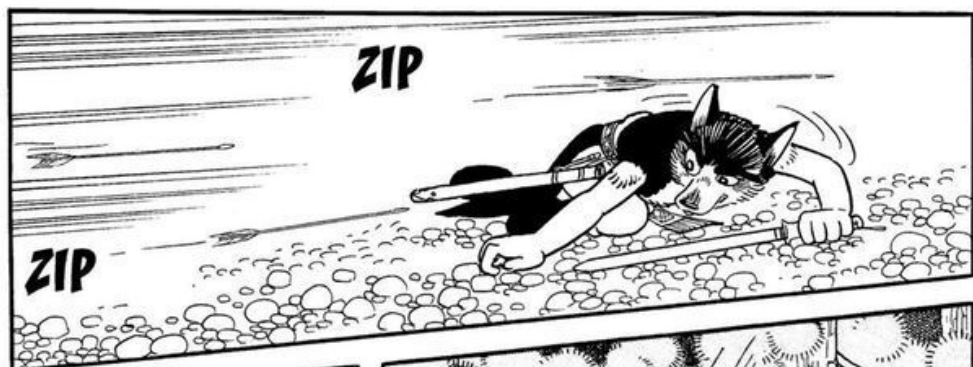
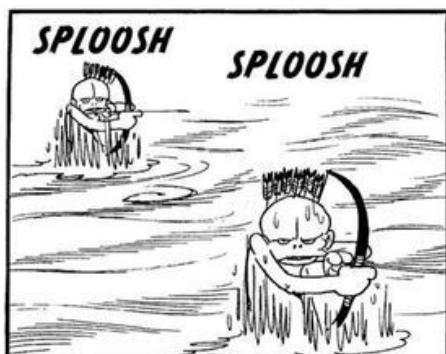
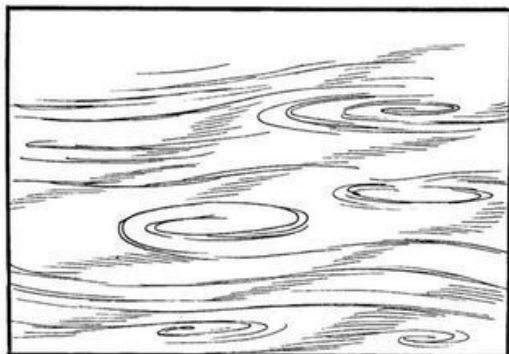
IT'S  
OBVIOUSLY  
DUE TO  
PRINCE OAMA,  
WHO'S  
ENTERED THE  
PRIESTHOOD  
BUT MUST BE  
WORKING  
BEHIND THE  
SCENES FOR  
YOU... CLEAR  
AS DAY, I'D  
SAY, SIR...

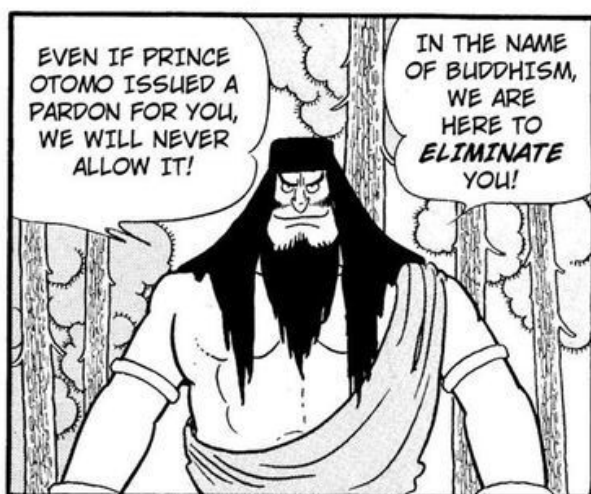


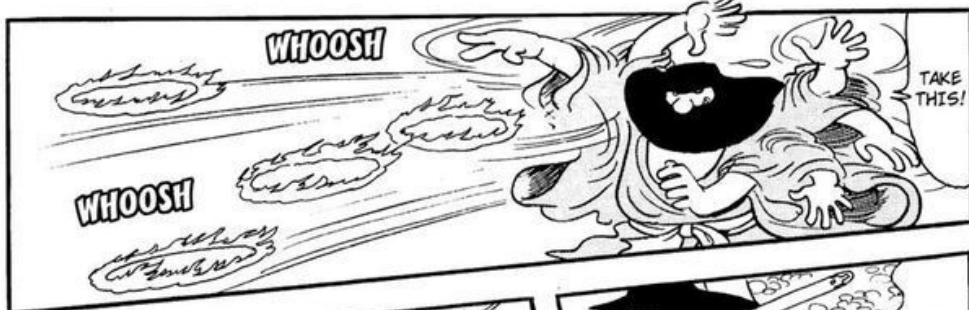










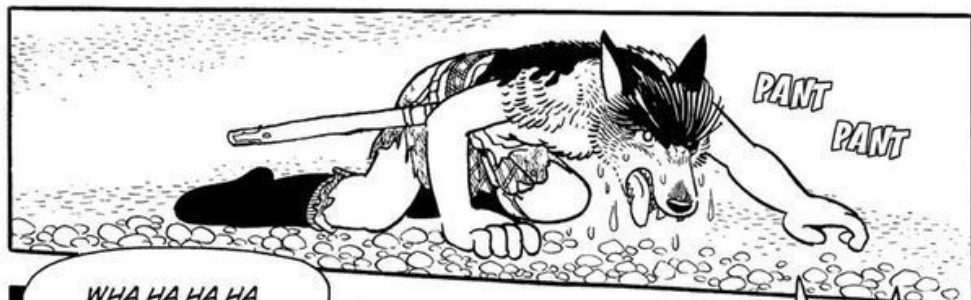
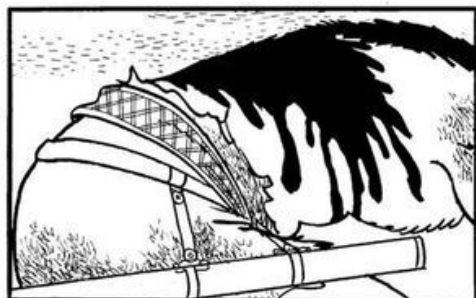


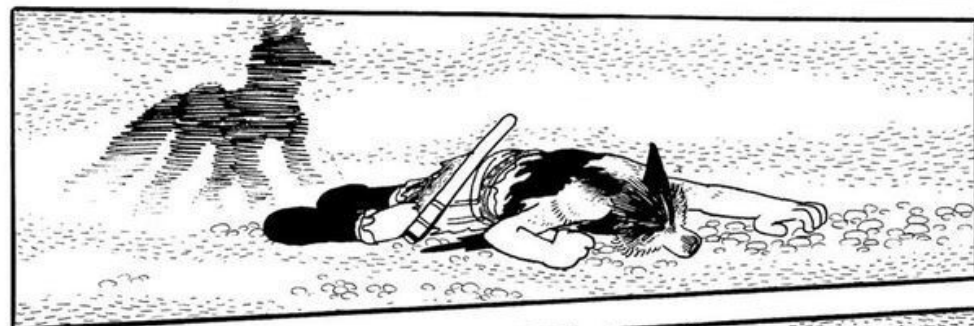


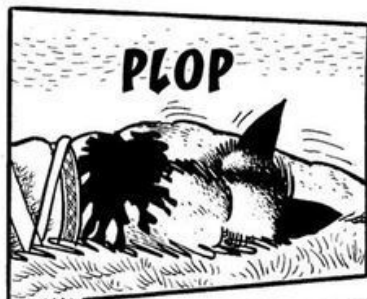












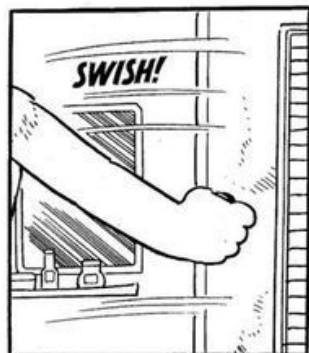








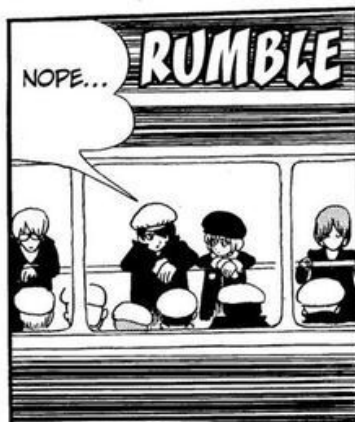
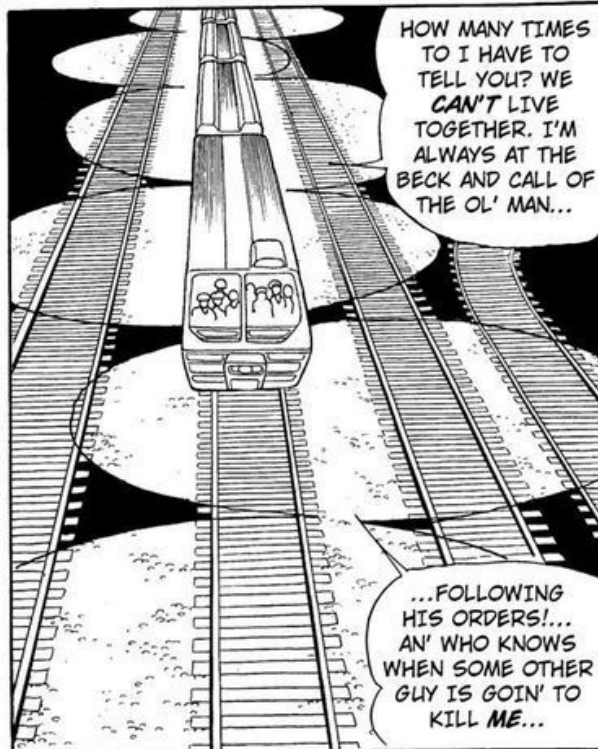
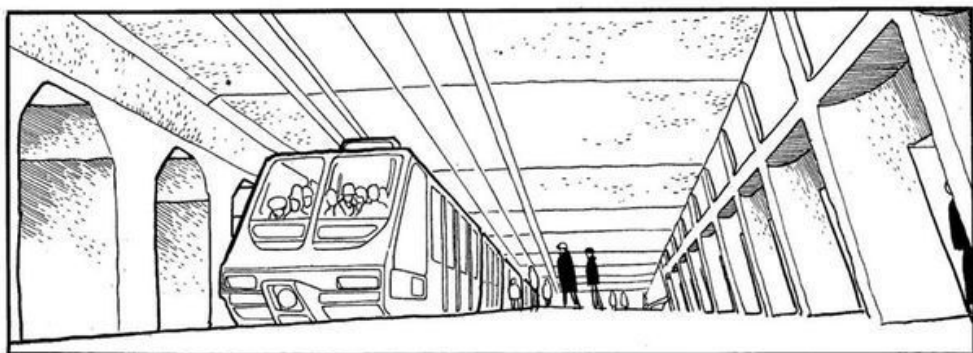


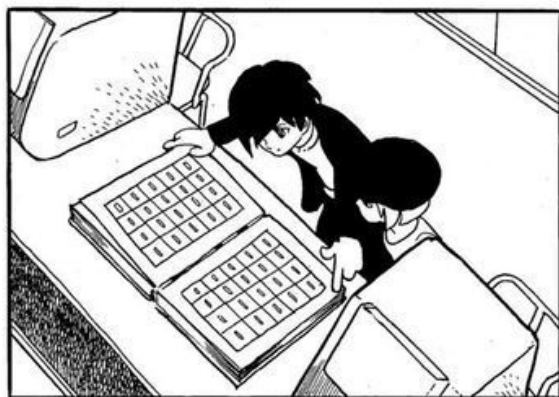






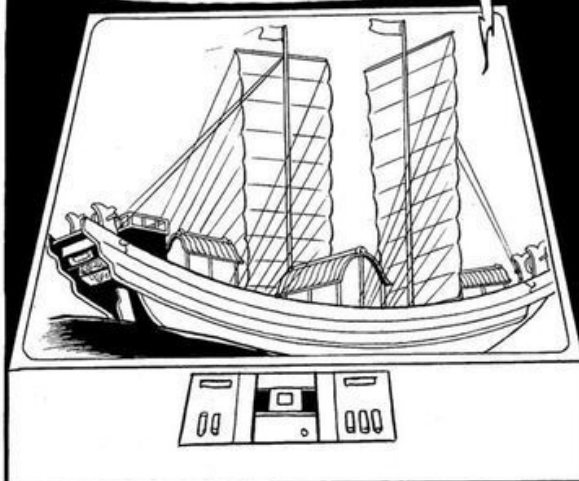








BETWEEN THE YEARS 661 AND 663, JAPAN SENT TROOPS TO SUPPORT PRINCE BUYEO PUNG OF THE BAEKJE KINGDOM ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA. DUE TO INTERNAL DISARRAY AND ACCIDENTS, JAPANESE FORCES WERE ROUNDLY DEFEATED.



B...BUT WHY DO YOU WANT TO KNOW THIS STUFF ALL OF A SUDDEN?

QUIET! I'M CONCENTRATING!



JAPANESE PRINCE NAKA NO OE (LATER THE EMPEROR TENJI) TRIED TO INSTALL BUYEO PUNG AS THE RULER OF BAEKJE TO HELP RESTORE ITS KINGDOM AND LIBERATE IT FROM TANG CHINA, BUT...

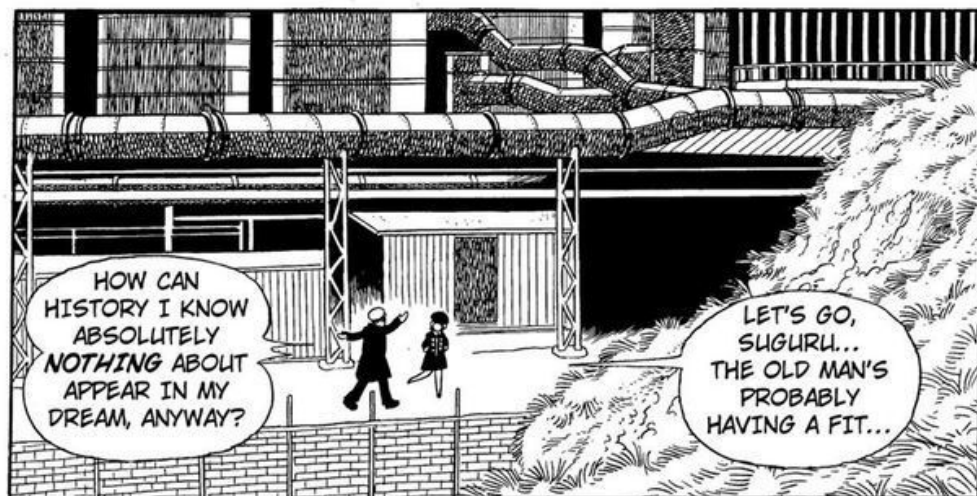
BUYEO PUNG!

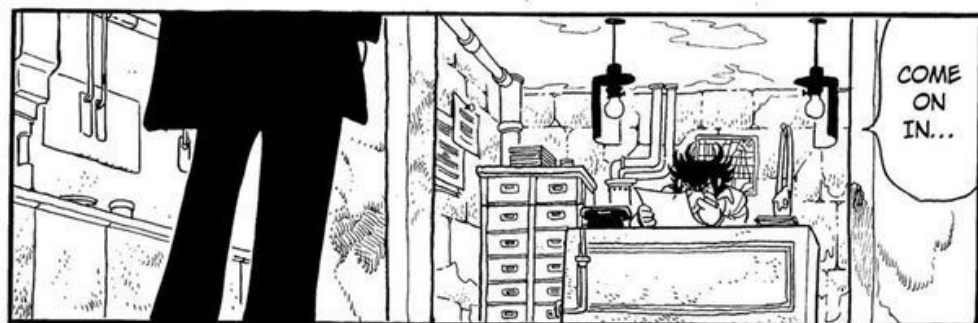
THAT'S THE NAME!!

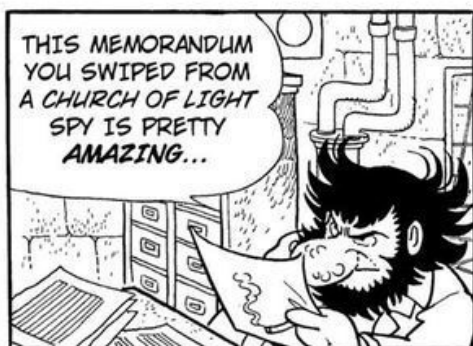
I DEFINITELY HEARD THE CHINESE GENERAL SAY THAT NAME!





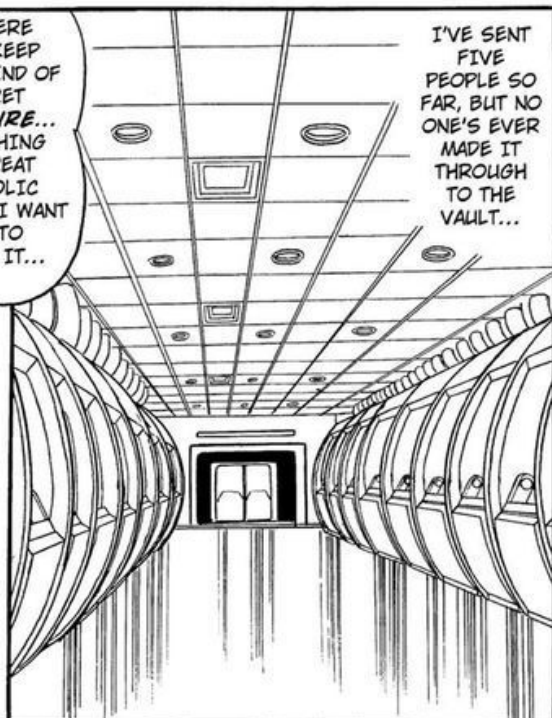








... WHERE THEY KEEP SOME KIND OF SECRET TREASURE... SOMETHING OF GREAT SYMBOLIC VALUE... I WANT YOU TO STEAL IT...

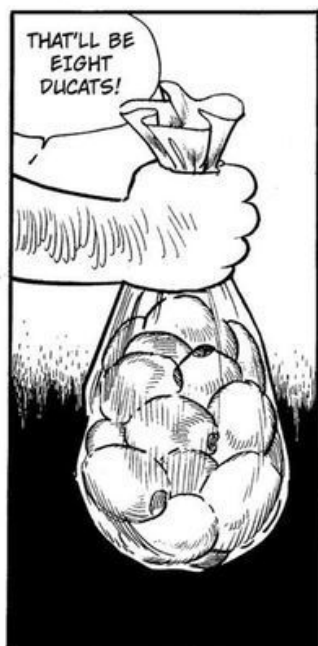
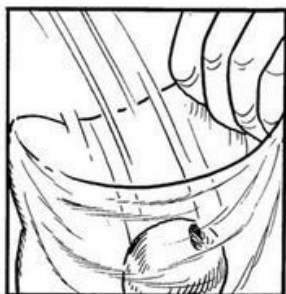
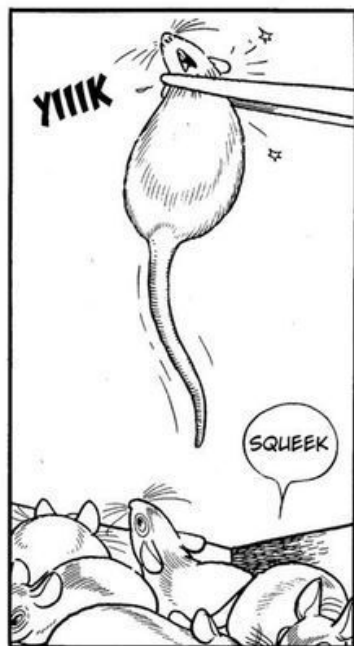
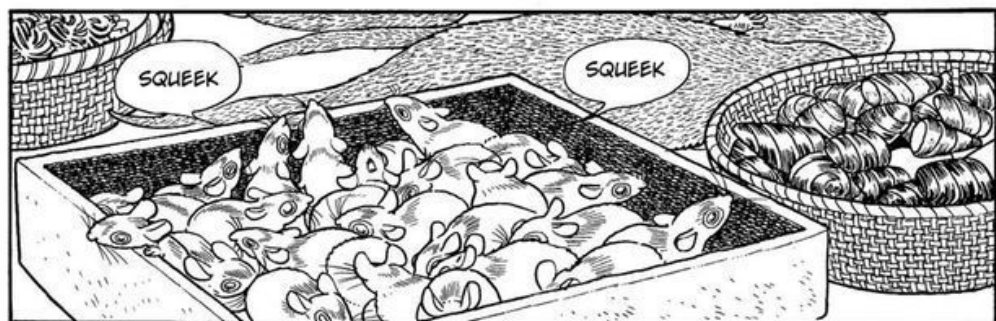


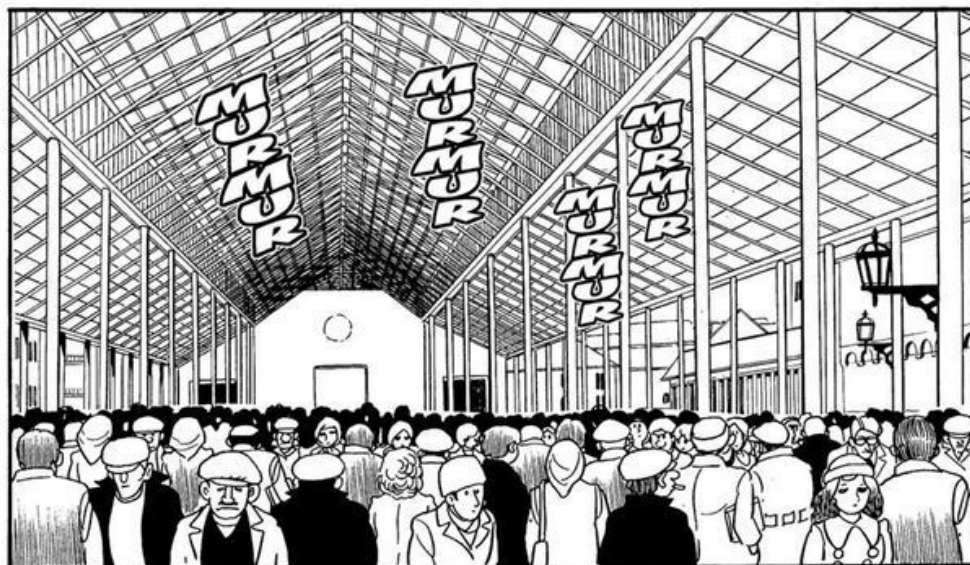
I'VE SENT FIVE PEOPLE SO FAR, BUT NO ONE'S EVER MADE IT THROUGH TO THE VAULT...

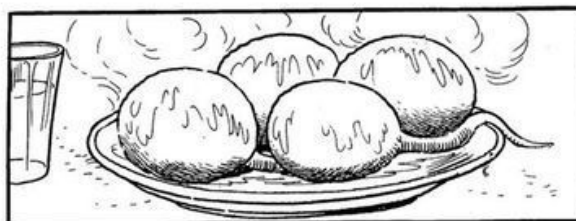
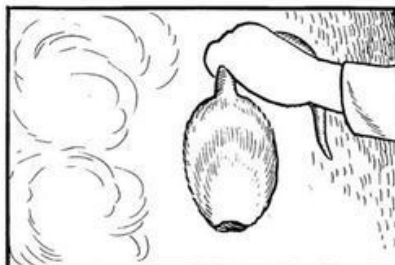
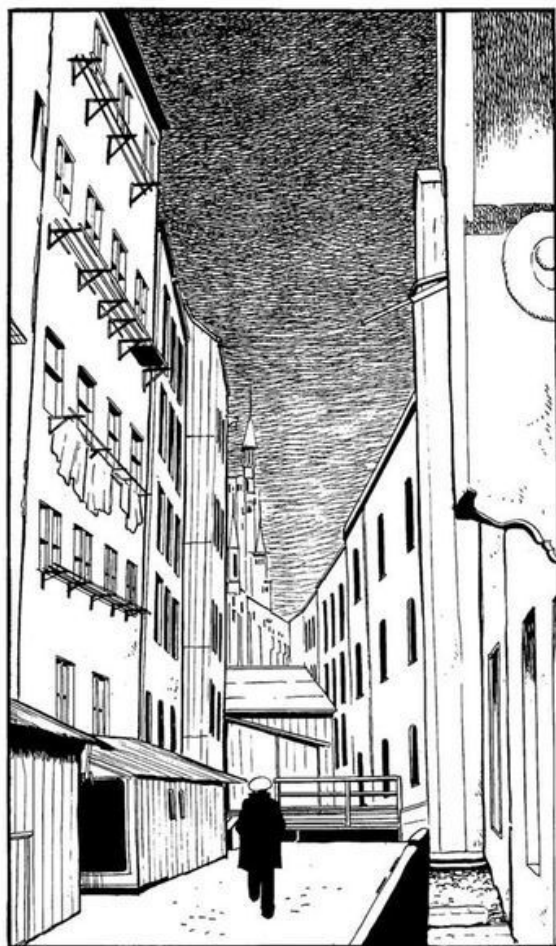


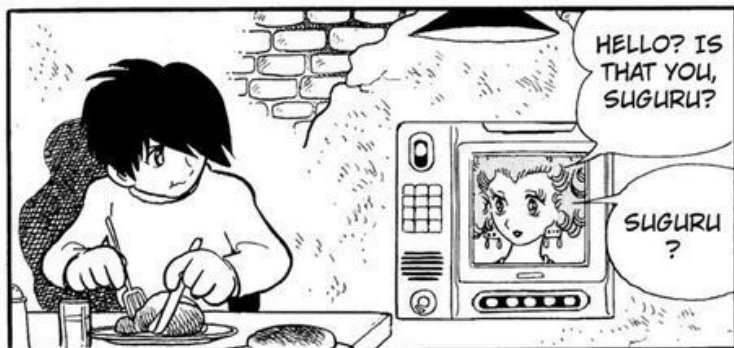
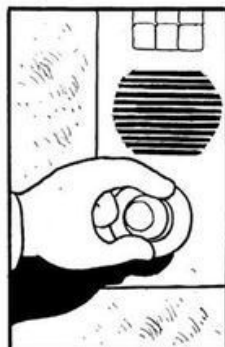
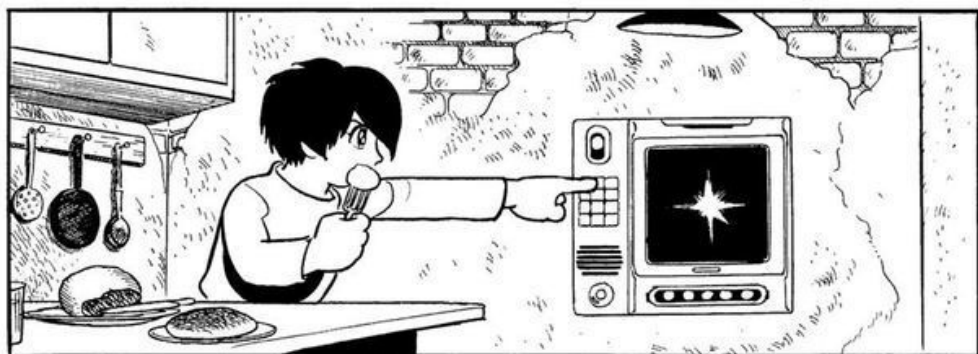




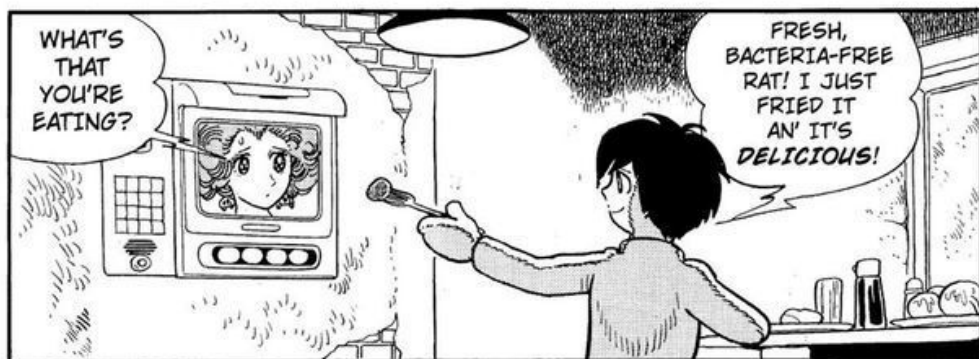




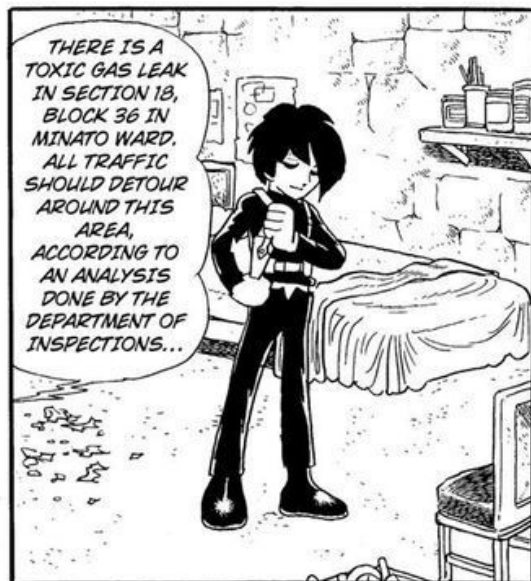


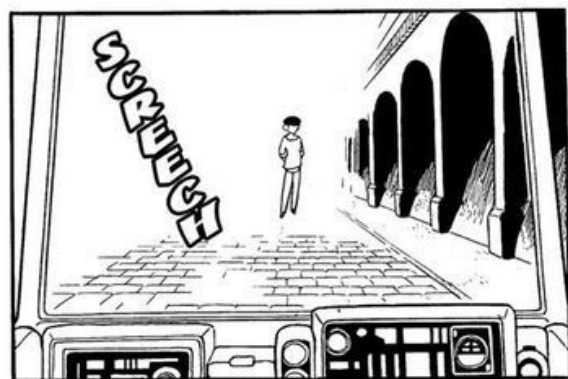
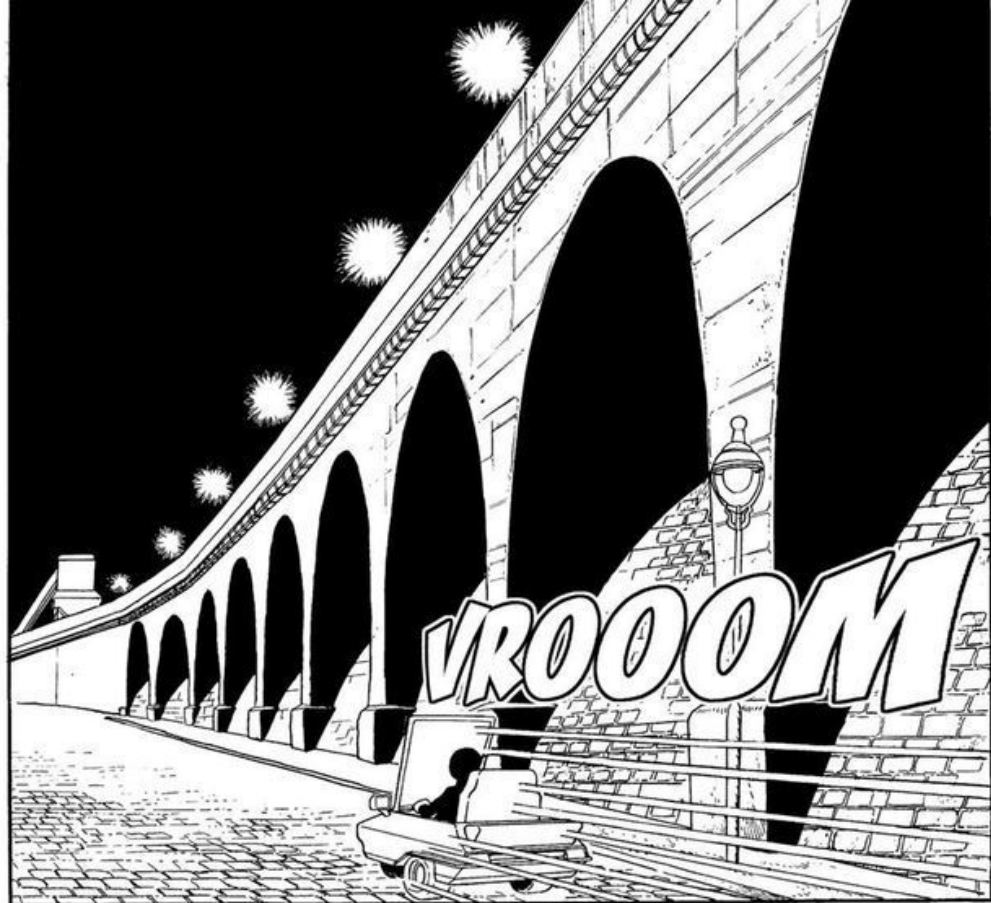


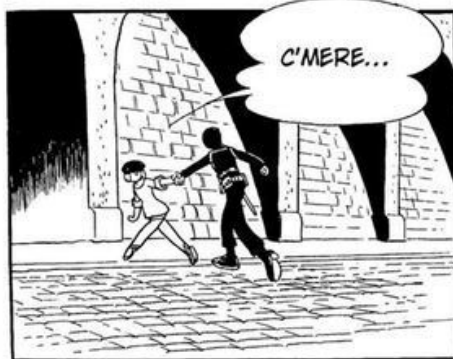
SORRY, SIS... BUT I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S NIGHT OR DAY ANYMORE...

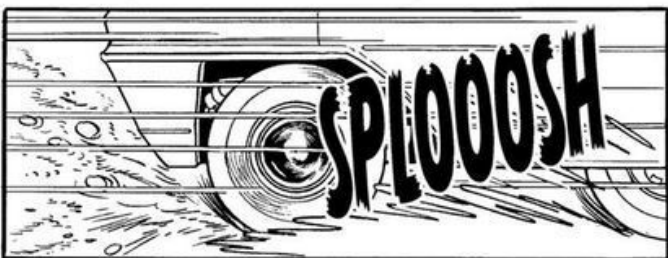
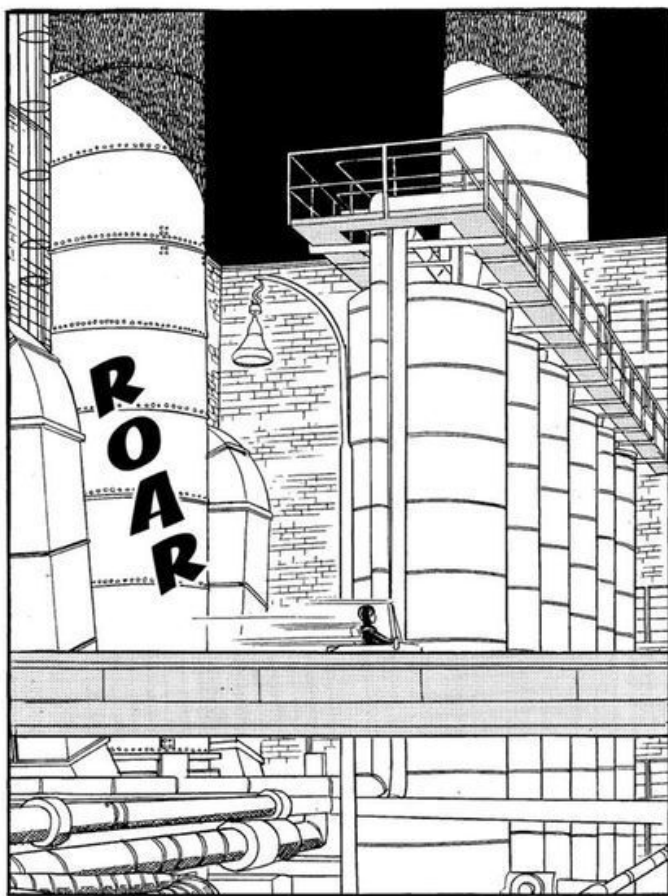


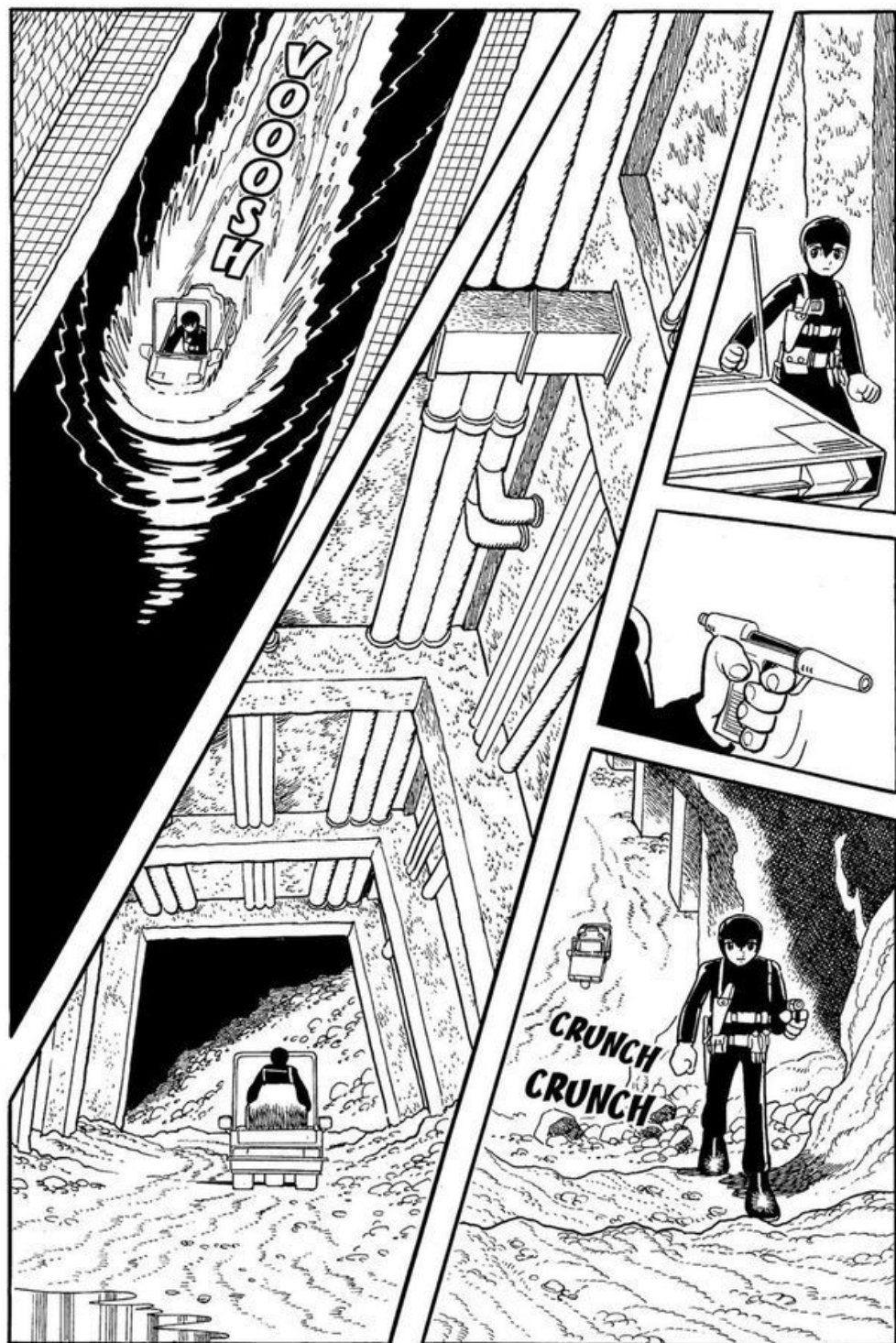




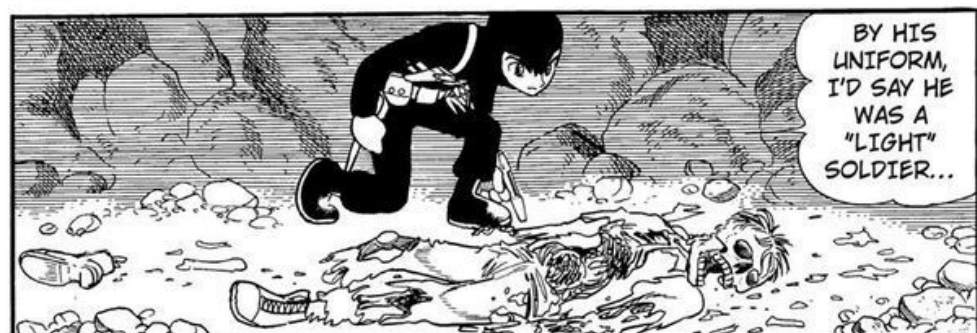
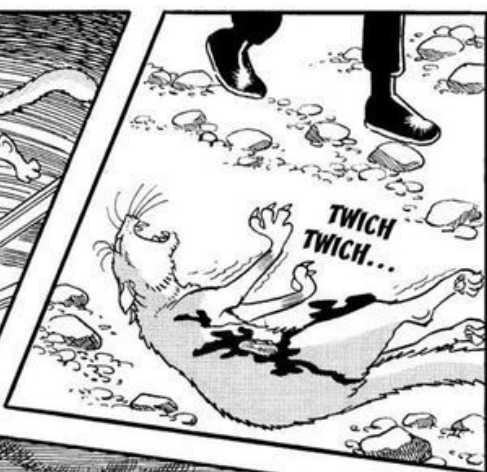


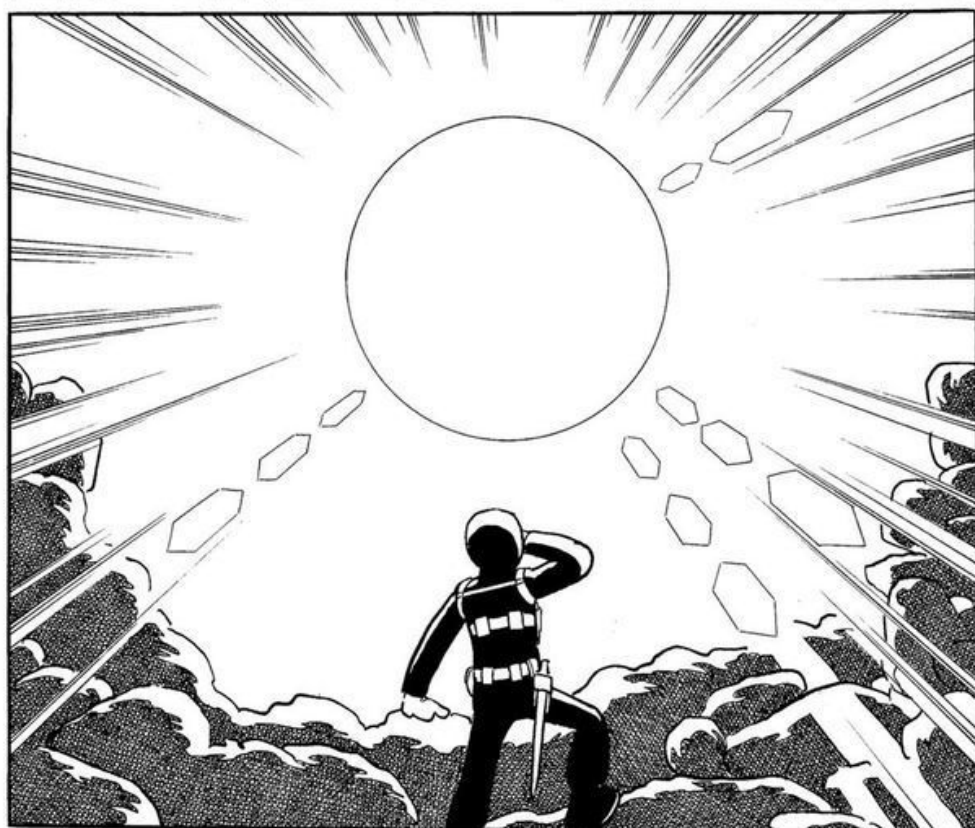


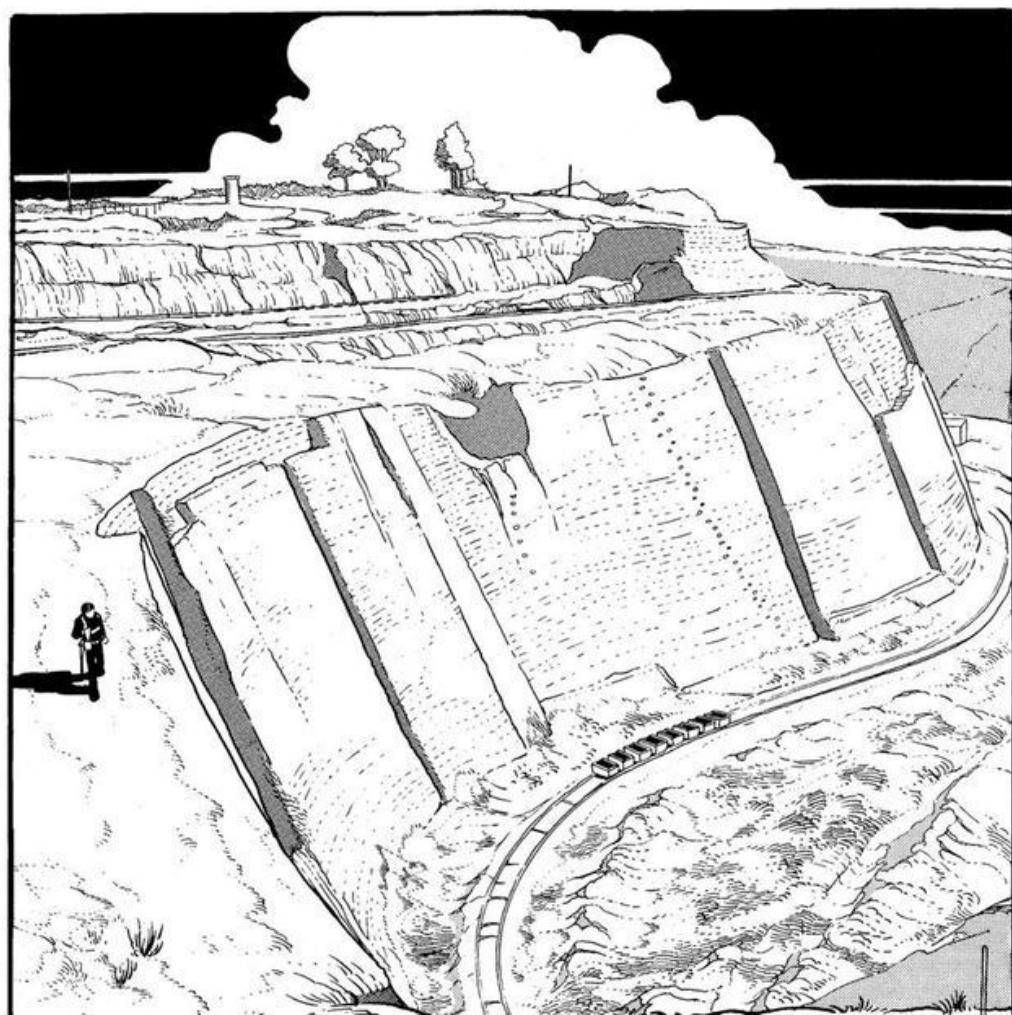
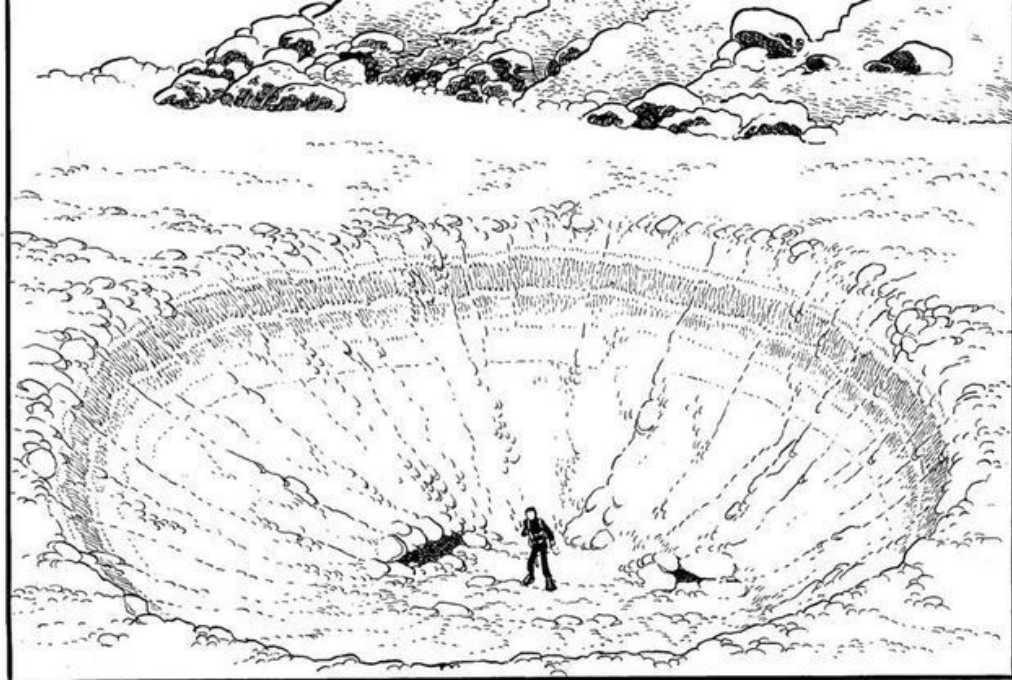


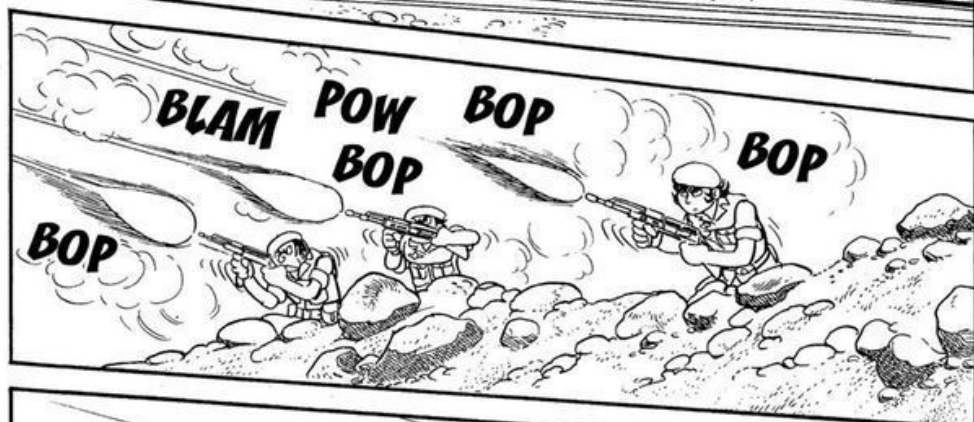






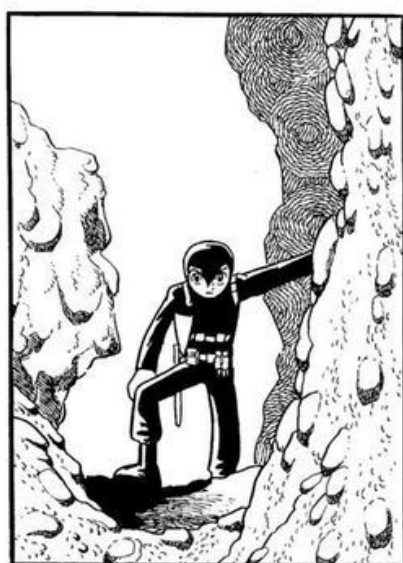


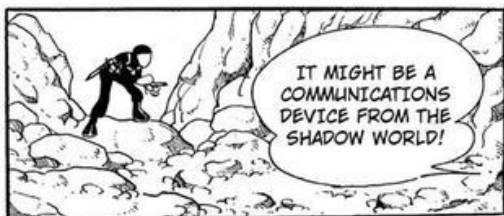
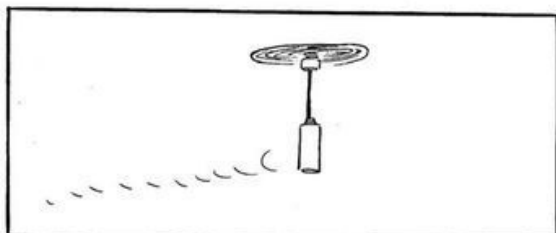
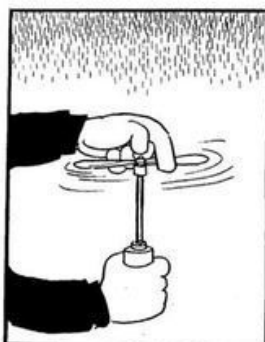


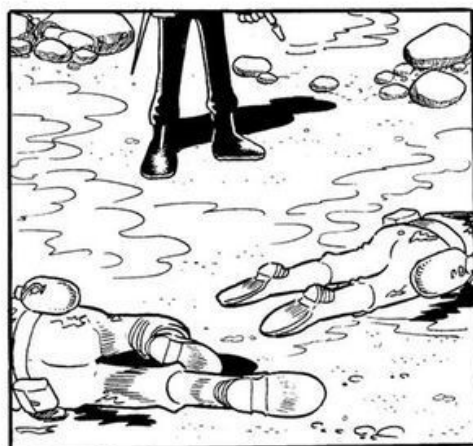






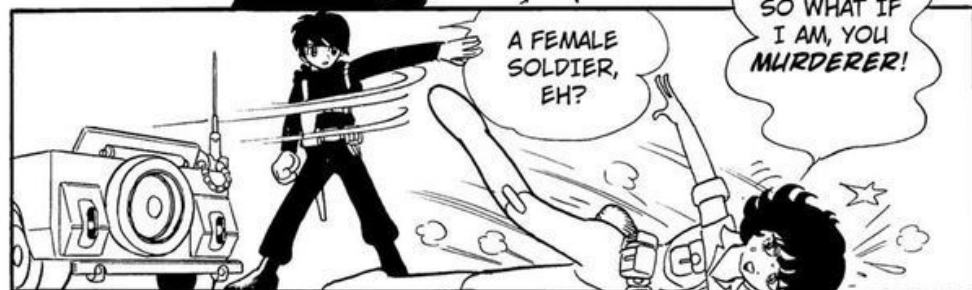






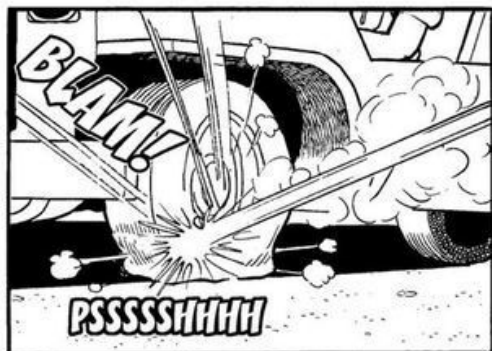
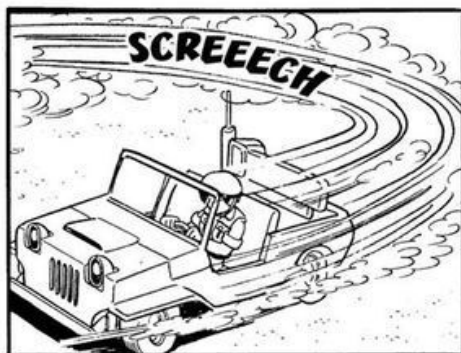
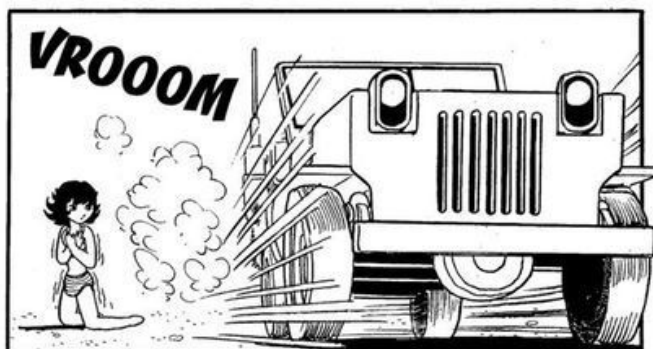


WHAT?! A  
WOMAN?!

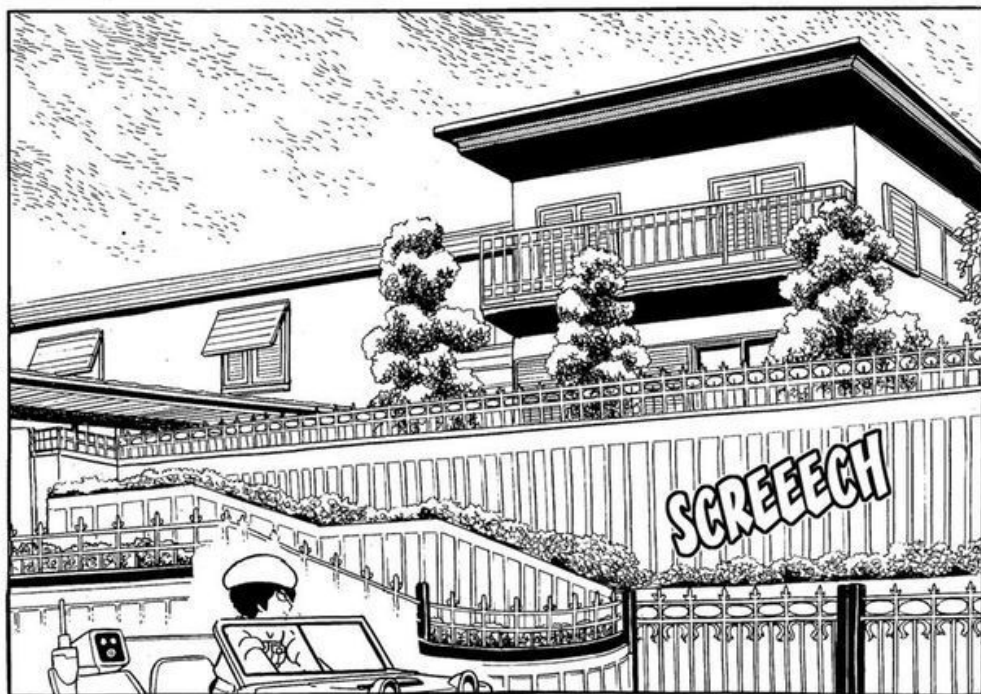
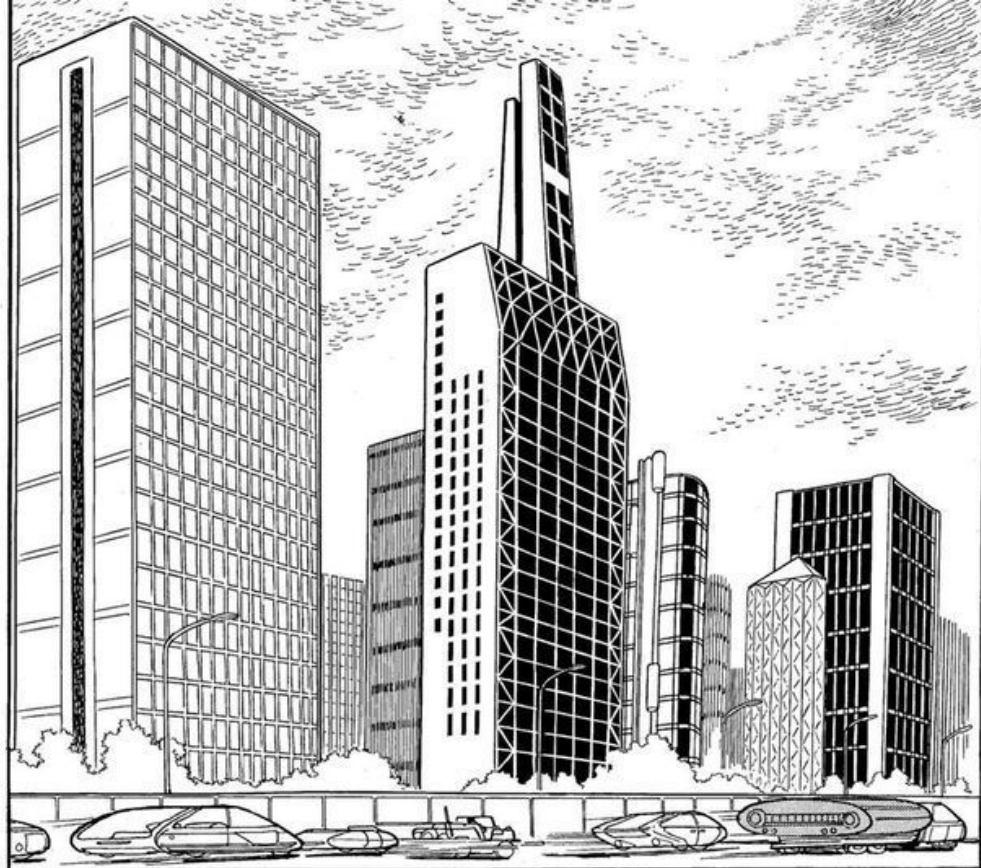


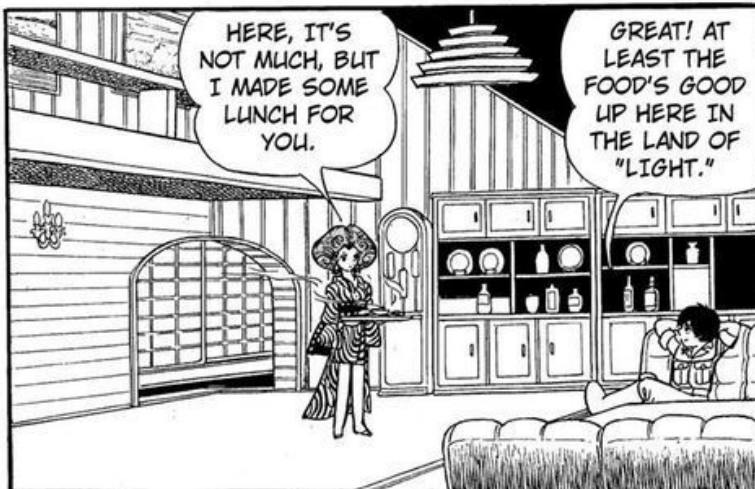
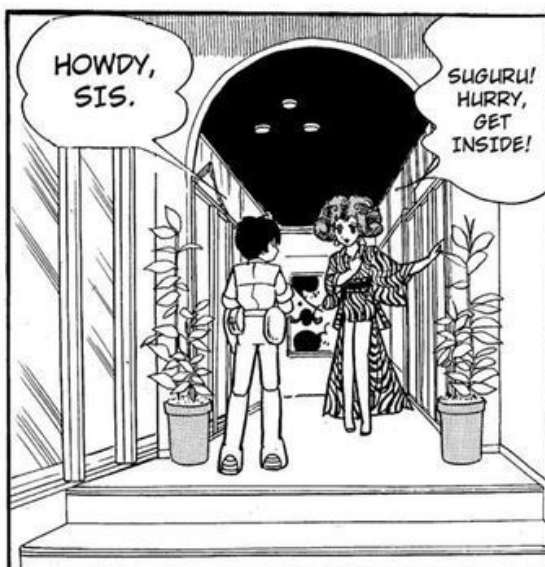


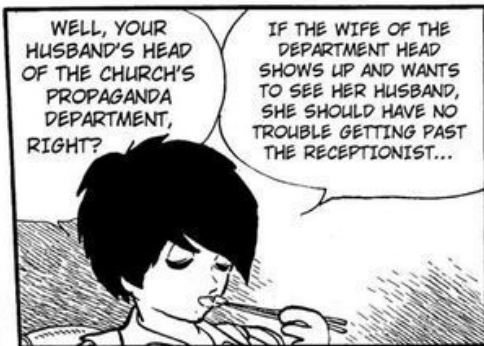
















I WAS SENT  
STRAIGHT TO  
SHADOW LAND,  
NO QUESTIONS  
ASKED.

JUST IMAGINE A  
CROSS BETWEEN  
THE UNDERGROUND  
MALLS AND THE  
HUGE SEWER  
SYSTEM THAT  
EXTENDS ALL THE  
WAY FROM TOKYO  
TO YOKOHAMA...

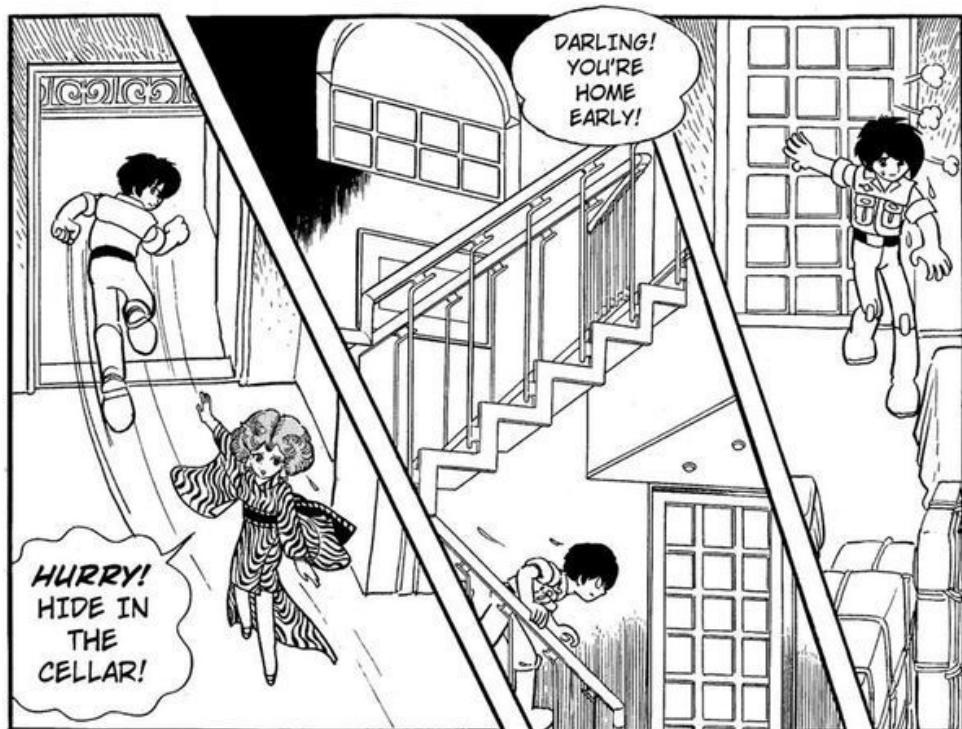
YOU NEVER  
SEE THE SUN.  
IT'S A DUSKY  
WORLD, WITH  
AIR FILLED  
WITH GRIT AND  
GRIME. WE ALL  
LIVE LIKE  
RATS DOWN  
THERE!

YOU DON'T  
EVEN *KNOW*  
WHAT KIND  
OF WORLD  
SHADOW  
LAND IS, DO  
YOU SIS?

I DO KNOW ALL  
ABOUT THAT,  
SUGURU...  
BUT THERE WAS  
NOTHING I COULD  
DO ABOUT IT...

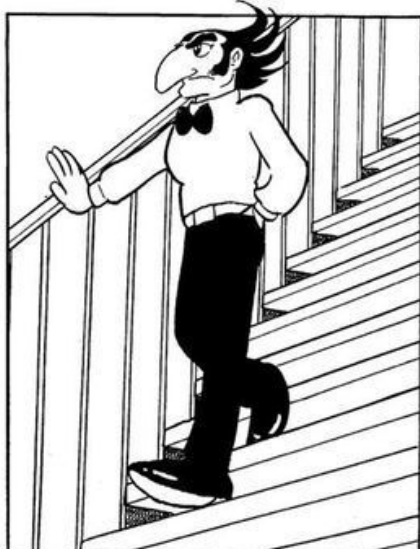
WELL, I'M  
GOING TO  
MAKE SURE  
THAT YOU  
MAKE UP FOR  
IT, AND PAY  
ME BACK IN  
SPADES!!

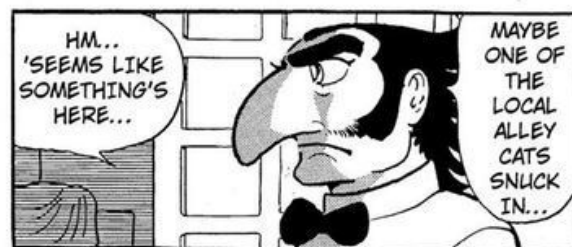
OH, NO!  
MY  
HUSBAND'S  
HOME!





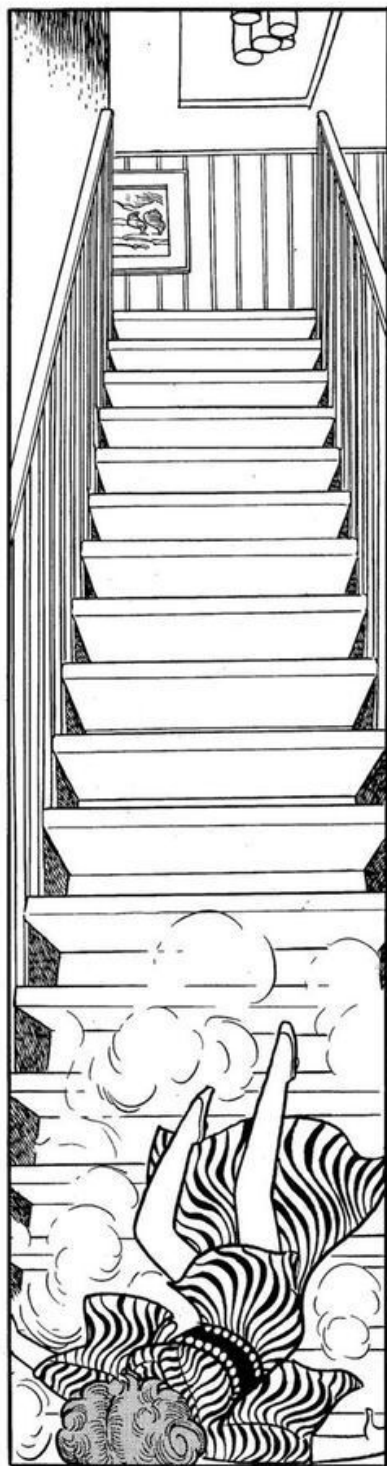
THERE'S BEEN SOMETHING WRONG WITH ME EVER SINCE I WAS BORN... IT'S PROBABLY ALSO WHY I KEEP HAVING THESE STRANGE VISIONS...





THUMP  
 ★  
 BUMP  
 ★  
 BAM  
 ★  
 KRUMP  
 ★  
 THUNK





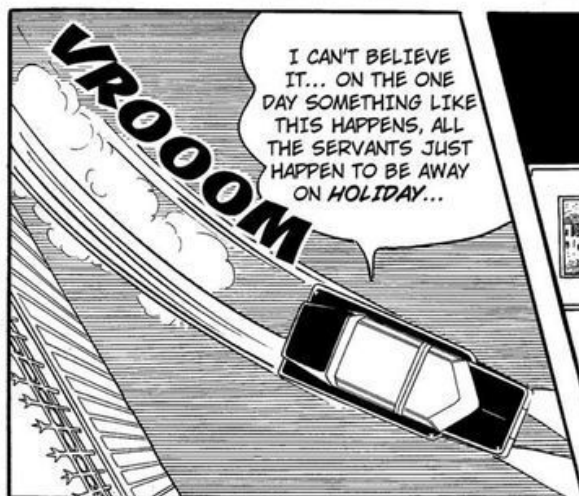
MY GOD!  
WHAT  
HAPPENED,  
DEAR? DID  
YOU TRIP?

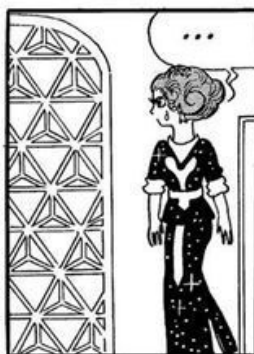


WHEW...

I...I'LL  
GO GET  
YOU  
HELP...







EXCUSE  
ME, MADAM,  
FOR THE  
SUDDEN  
VISIT...

I'M ISAHARA,  
FROM THE  
PROPAGANDA  
DEPARTMENT...  
I'VE COME TO  
SEE YOUR  
HUSBAND.



YOU **ARE**  
THERE, AREN'T  
YOU MA'AM?

WE SAW YOU  
THROUGH THE  
WINDOW...

AH...  
THANK  
YOU.

WOULD YOU  
HAPPEN TO  
KNOW WHERE  
HE WENT?

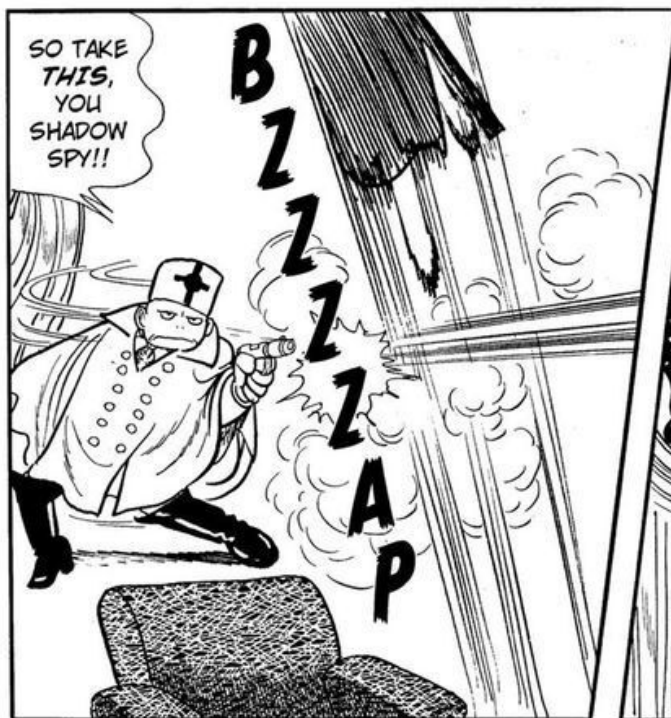
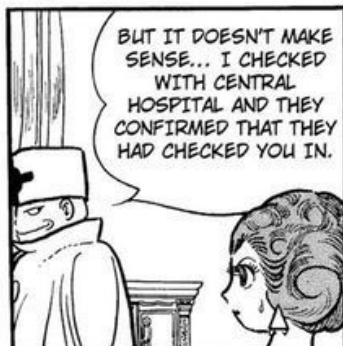
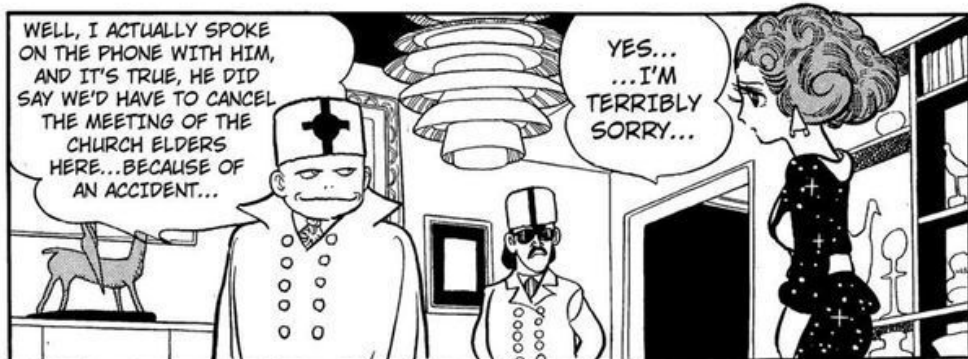
HE...HE SAID  
A FRIEND OF  
HIS FELL  
DOWN SOME  
STAIRS AND  
WAS BADLY  
HURT...

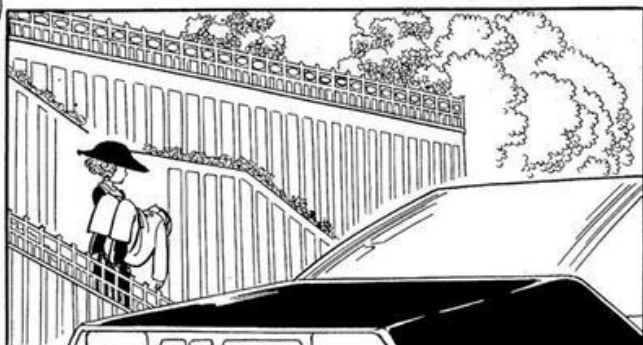
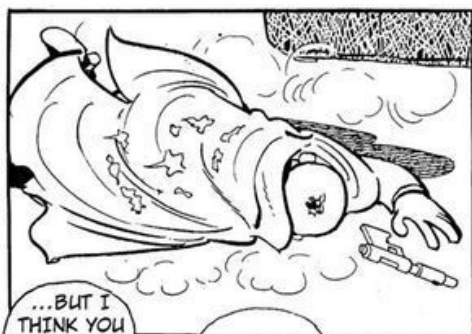
I'M SORRY,  
YOU JUST  
MISSED MY  
HUSBAND...

IS THAT SO?  
AND IF THAT'S  
THE CASE,  
WHO'S SPORTS CAR  
IS THAT  
OUTSIDE?

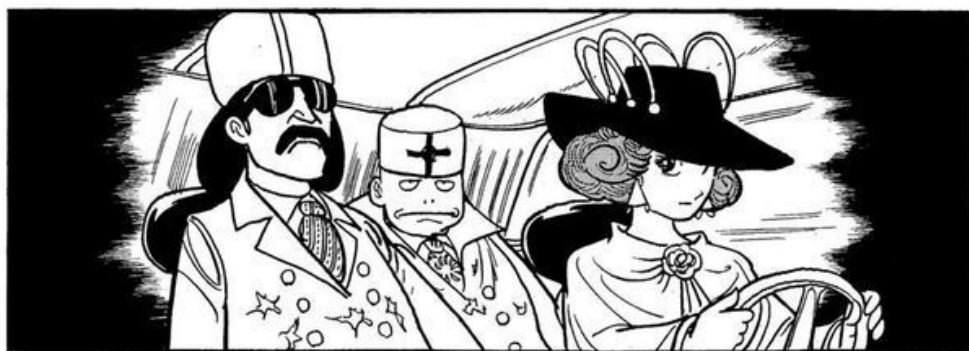
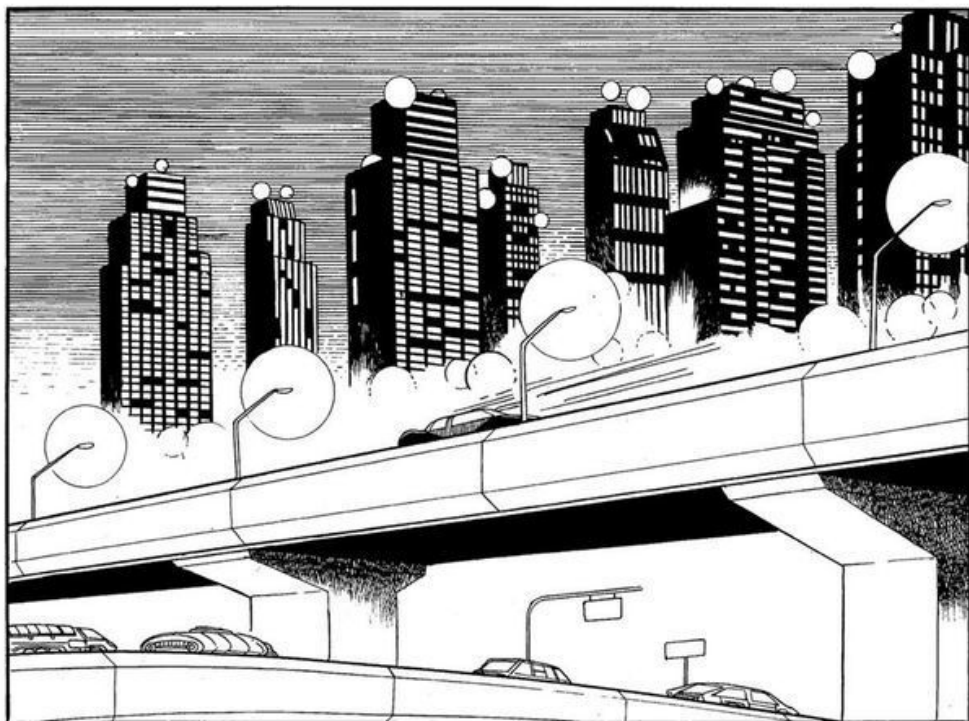
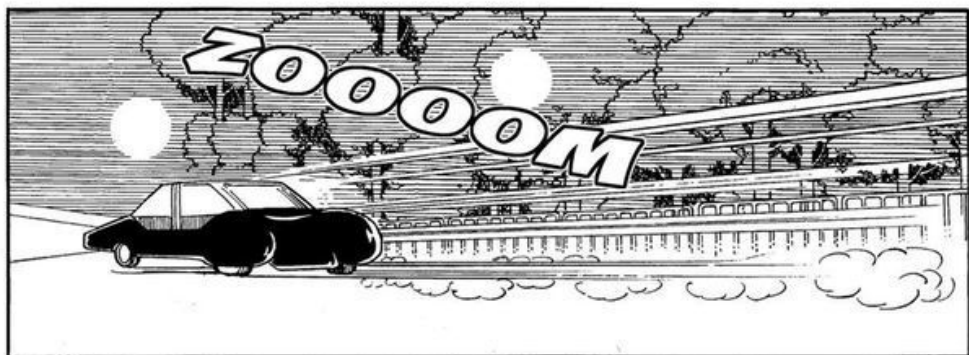
SO HE  
WENT TO  
SEE HIM...

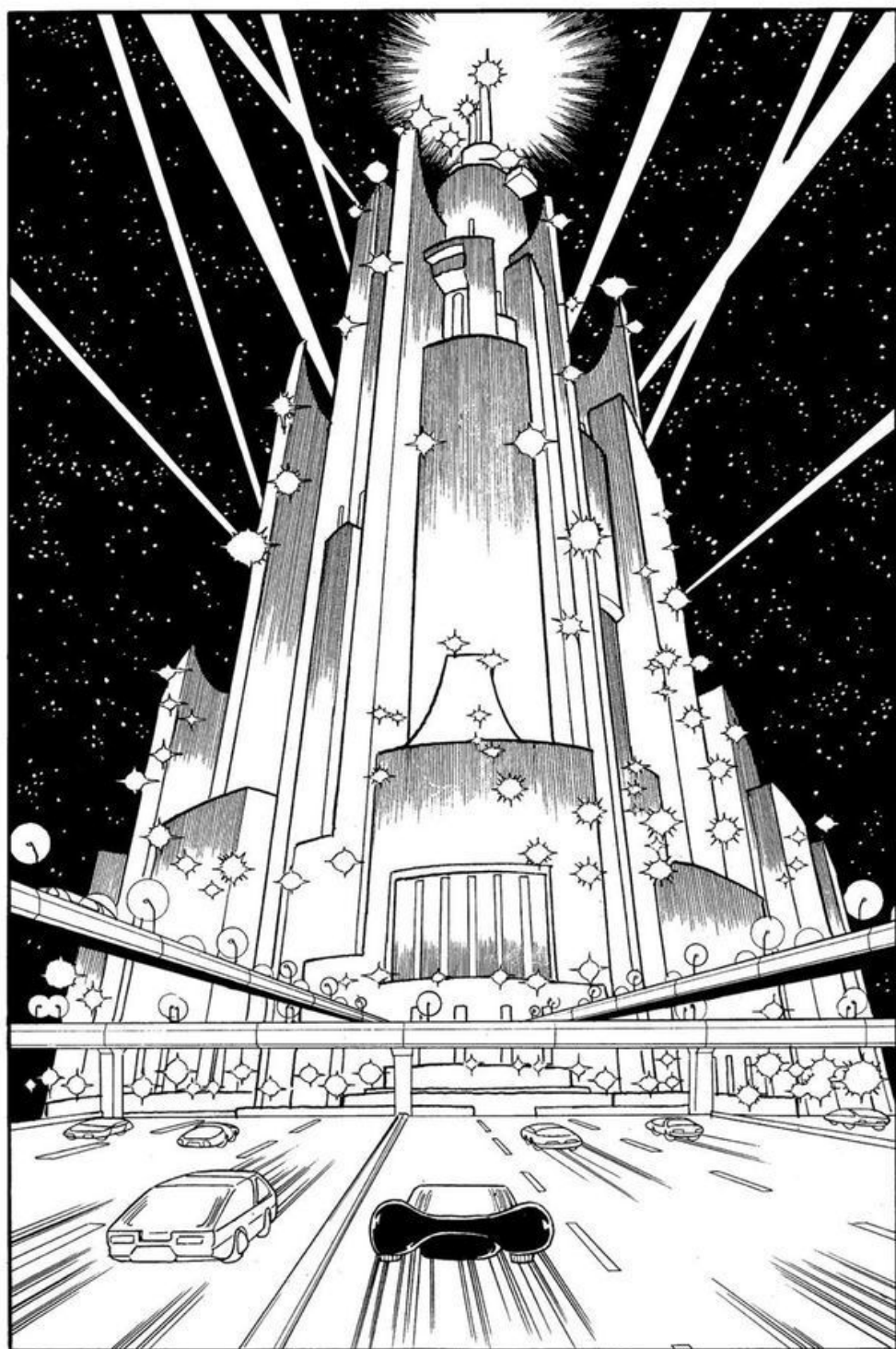
IS  
THAT  
SO...

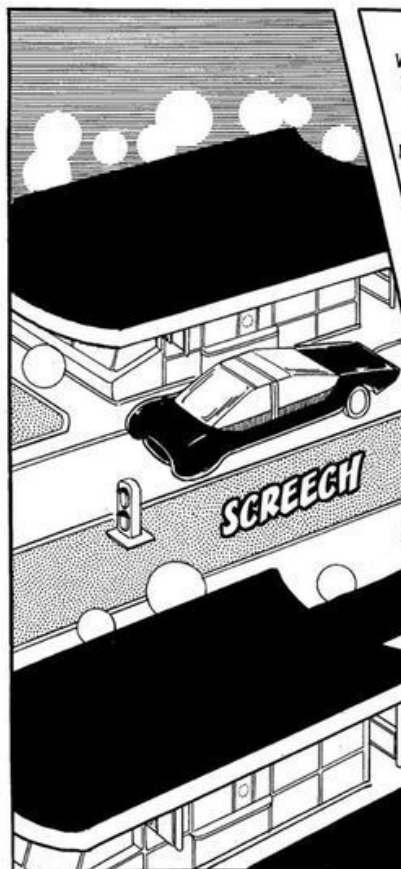












THE  
WIFE OF  
PROPA-  
GANDA  
CHIEF,  
NAMBU?



SORRY, BUT  
YOUR HUSBAND  
LEFT QUITE A  
WHILE AGO,  
MA'AM...

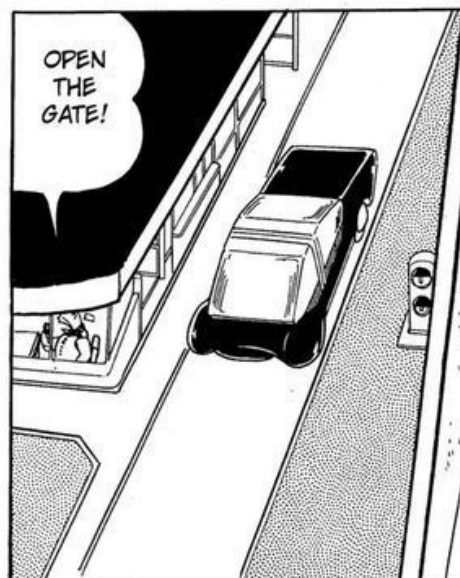


ACTUALLY,  
MY  
HUSBAND  
ASKED  
ME...

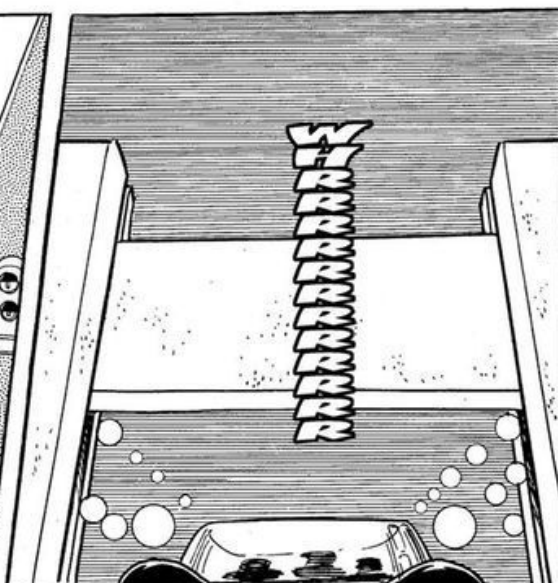
...TO GIVE  
SOME OF  
HIS CO-  
WORKERS A  
RIDE BACK  
HERE...

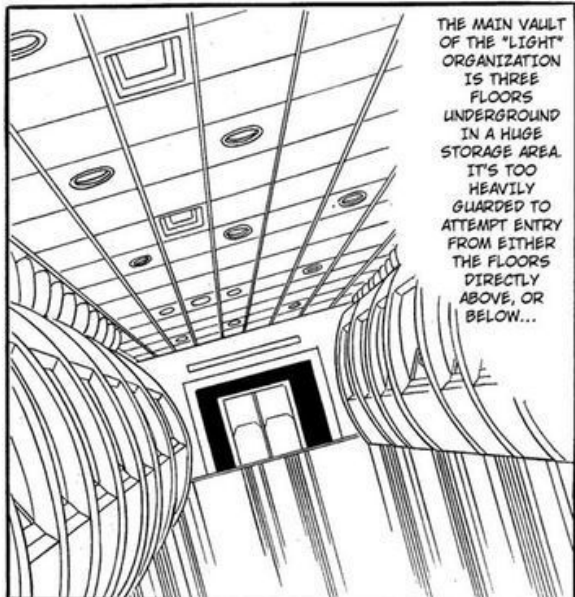
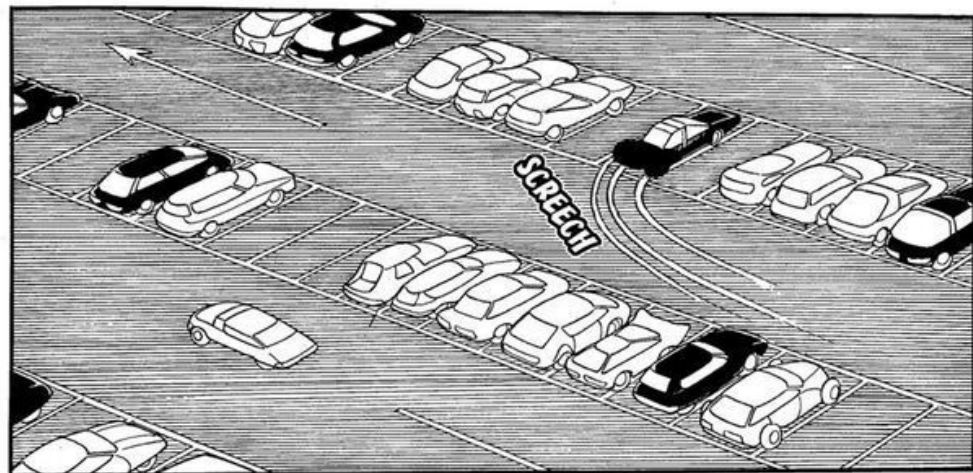
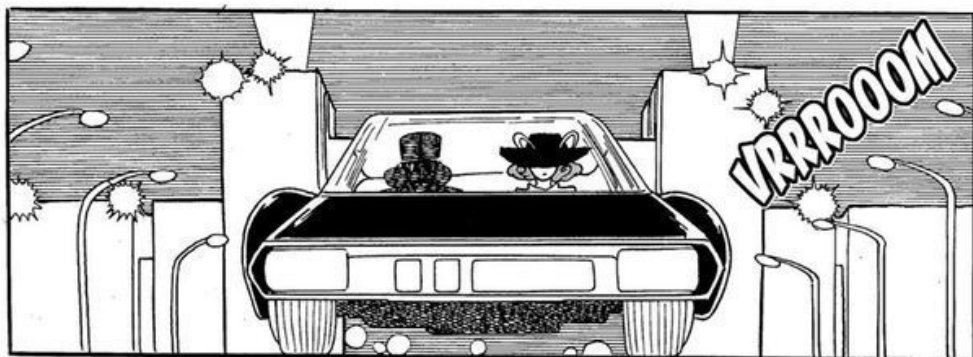


OH! GOOD  
TO SEE  
YOU, MR.  
ISAHAYA,  
SIR...



OPEN  
THE  
GATE!





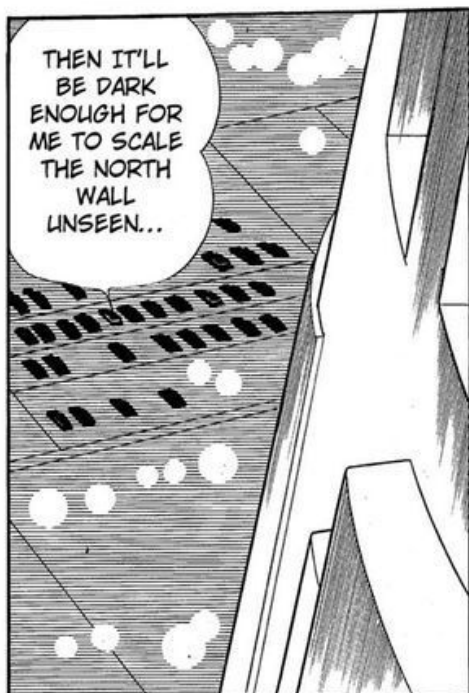


ALL THE  
OTHER  
SPIES HAVE  
TRIED A  
CONVENT-  
IONAL  
ATTACK, AND  
THAT'S WHY  
THEY'VE  
FAILED...

IF I CAN  
GET TO THE  
ROOF OF  
THE HEAD-  
QUARTERS  
BUILDING AND  
THEN DESCEND  
BY ELEVATOR  
STRAIGHT  
TO THE UNDER-  
GROUND  
FLOOR, I  
MIGHT  
HAVE A  
CHANCE...



I'VE GOTTA  
WAIT UNTIL  
2:00AM, WHEN  
THE LIGHTING  
ON THE  
BUILDING'S  
REDUCED  
TWENTY  
PERCENT...



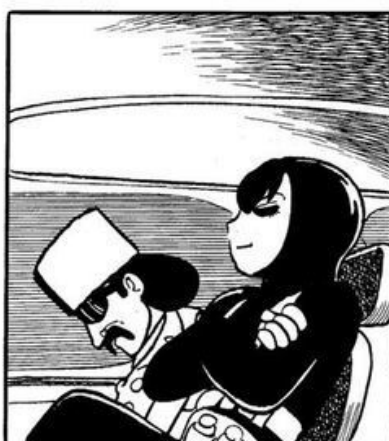
THEN IT'LL  
BE DARK  
ENOUGH FOR  
ME TO SCALE  
THE NORTH  
WALL  
UNSEEN...



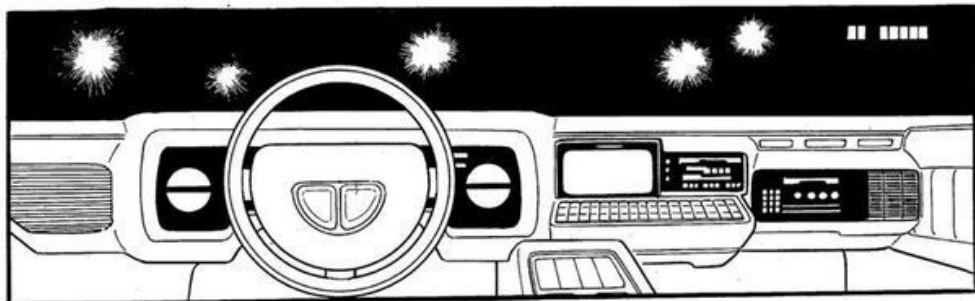
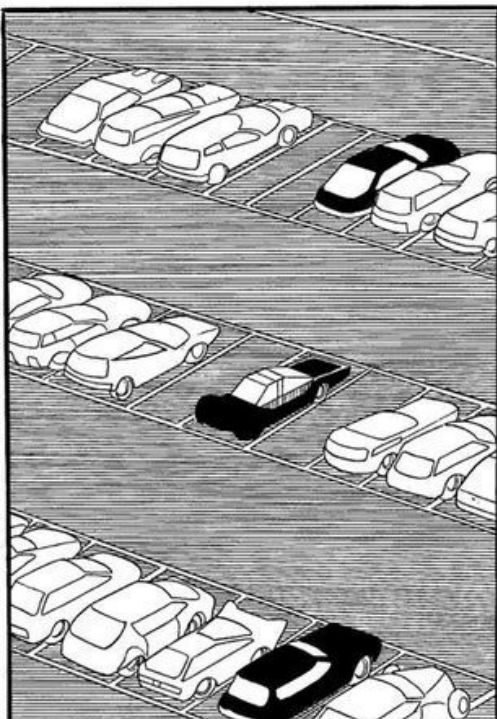
SO I'LL  
JUST  
TAKE A  
NAP 'TIL  
2:00AM.

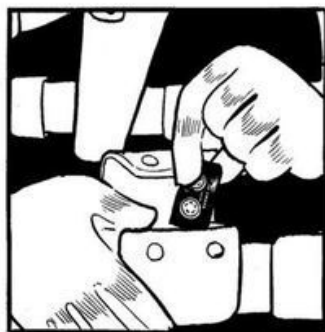


MAYBE YOU  
SHOULD GET  
SOME SHUT  
EYE, TOO,  
PAL.









WOW... IT'S A  
MINI SOUND  
CASSETTE.

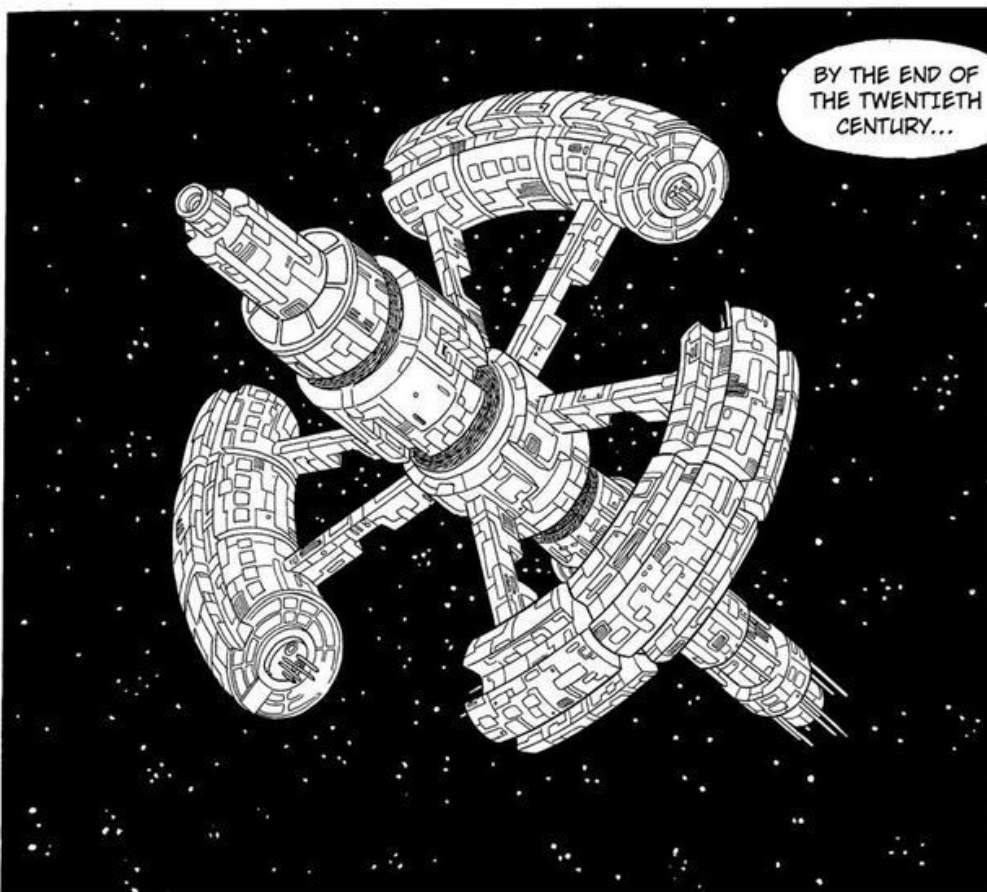
SOMEONE  
MUST'VE  
PUT IT  
IN MY  
UTILITY  
BELT...



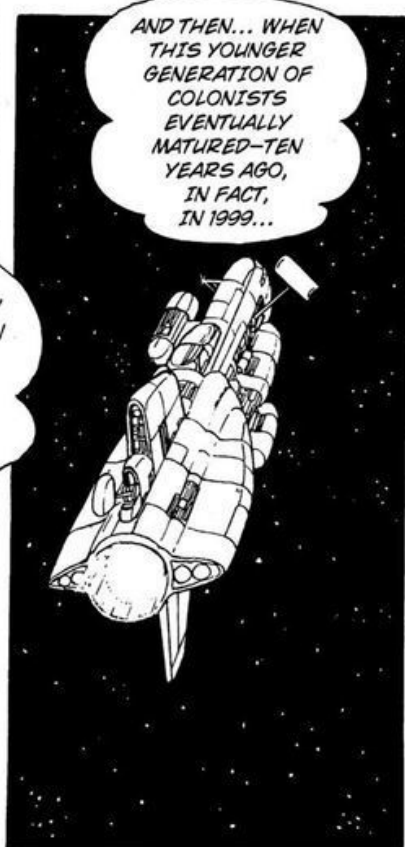
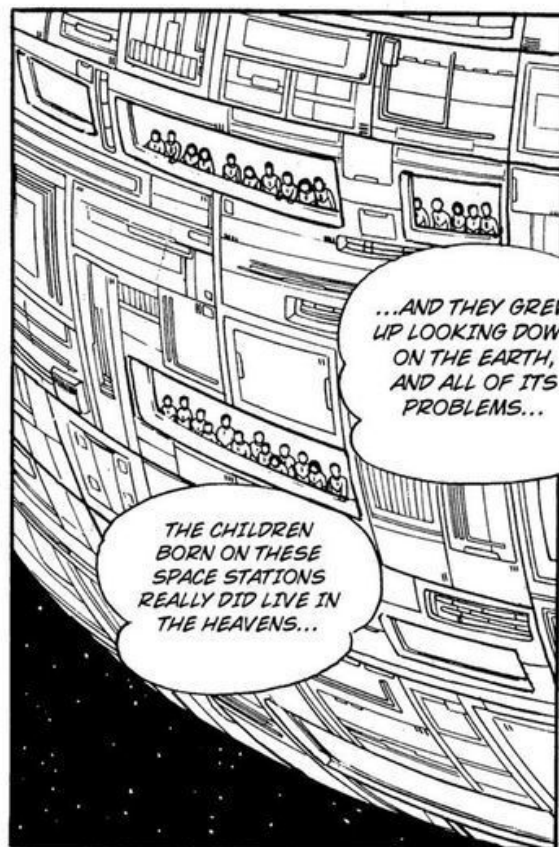
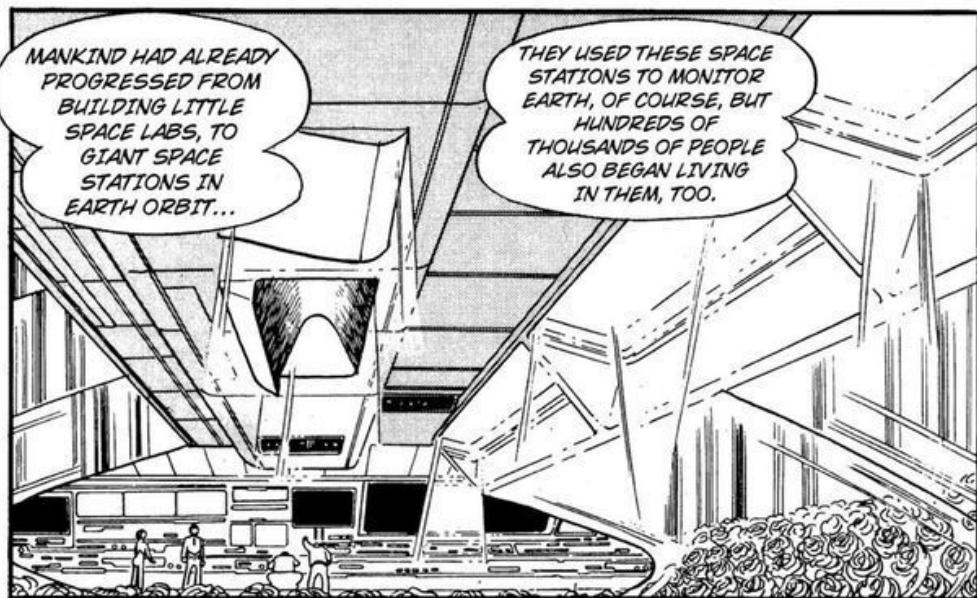
SUGURU BANDO!  
DON'T BE  
SURPRISED...  
YOU DO RECOGNIZE MY  
VOICE, DON'T YOU?  
THERE'S SOMETHING  
I NEED TO TELL YOU  
BEFORE YOU START  
YOUR MISSION, SO  
I RECORDED A  
SOUND CASSETTE  
FOR YOU...

YIKES!  
IT'S THE  
OLD MAN!

THERE ARE  
SOME THINGS  
YOU NEED  
TO KNOW  
ABOUT THE  
BIRD OF  
FIRE...



BY THE END OF  
THE TWENTIETH  
CENTURY...



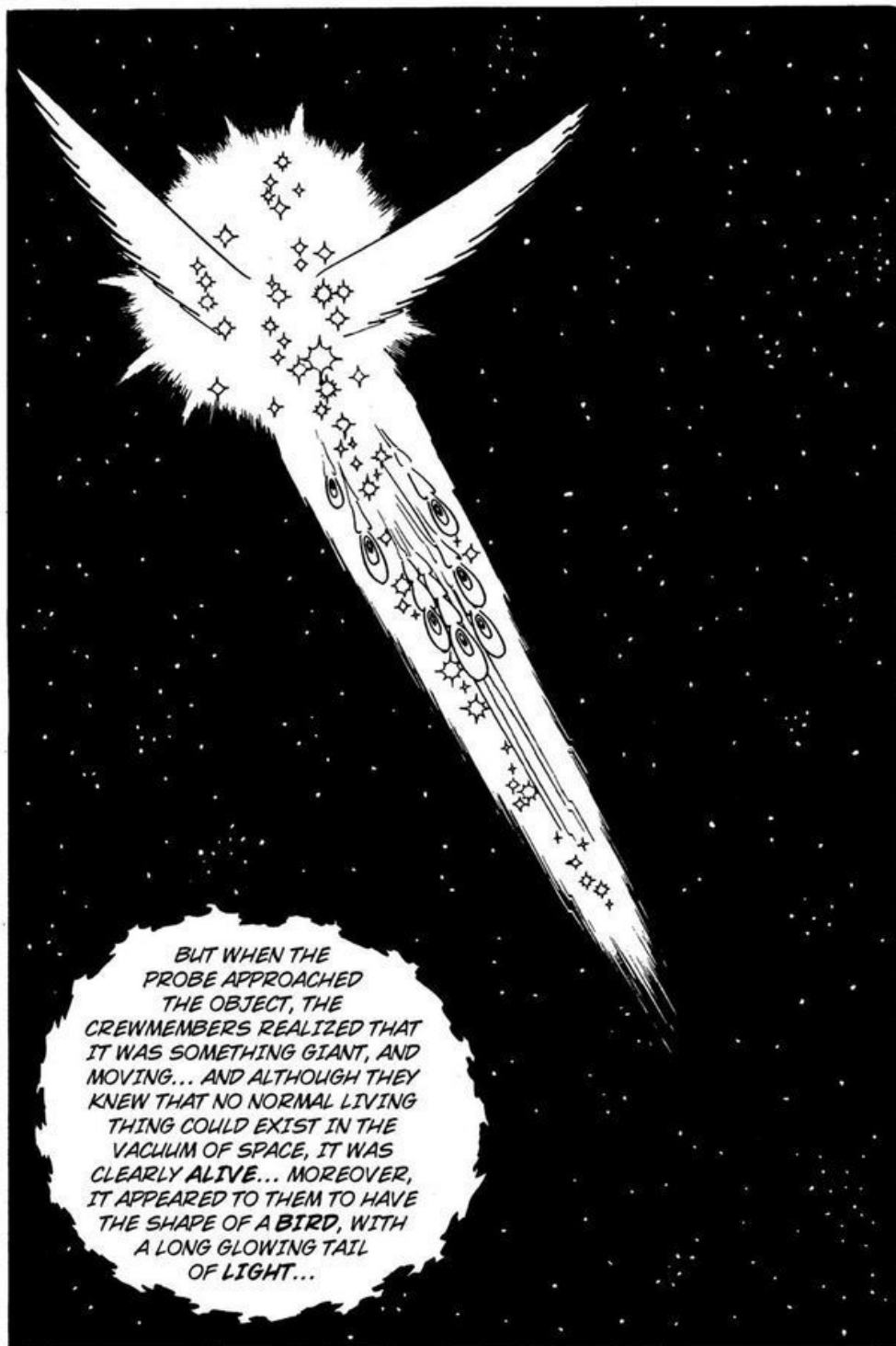


...A MANNED  
INTER-  
PLANETARY  
PROBE WAS  
SENT TO  
VENUS...

IT WAS A LONG  
VOYAGE, AND THERE  
WERE ONLY FIVE  
CREW MEMBERS ON  
BOARD THE PROBE,  
BUT AMONG THEM  
WAS A YOUNG  
ENGINEER NAMED  
OTOMO...

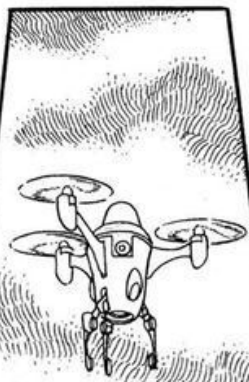
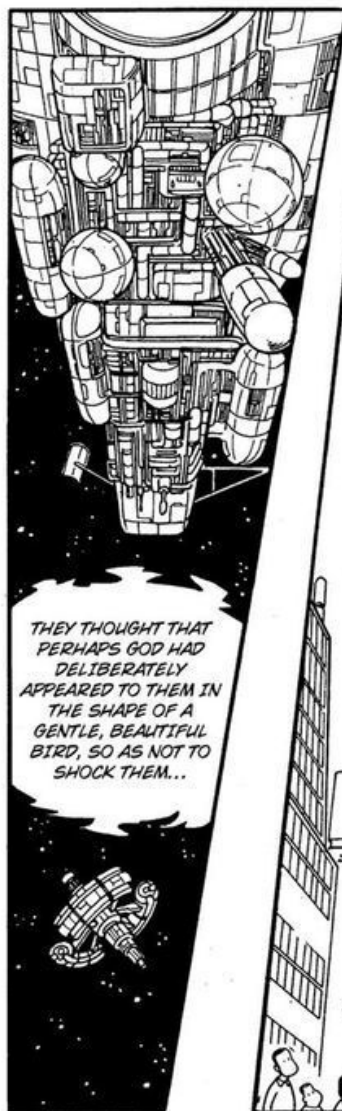
AND ONE DAY OTOMO  
SUDDENLY SPOTTED  
A MYSTERIOUS,  
GLOWING OBJECT, IN  
THE SAME GENERAL  
PATH AS VENUS'  
ORBIT AROUND  
THE SUN...

AT FIRST HE  
THOUGHT THAT  
IT WAS A  
COMET...

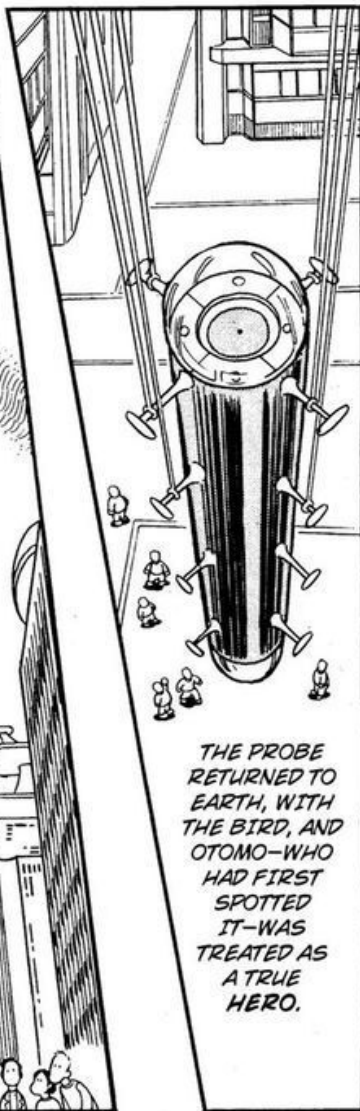


BUT WHEN THE  
PROBE APPROACHED  
THE OBJECT, THE  
CREWMEMBERS REALIZED THAT  
IT WAS SOMETHING GIANT, AND  
MOVING... AND ALTHOUGH THEY  
KNEW THAT NO NORMAL LIVING  
THING COULD EXIST IN THE  
VACUUM OF SPACE, IT WAS  
CLEARLY ALIVE... MOREOVER,  
IT APPEARED TO THEM TO HAVE  
THE SHAPE OF A BIRD, WITH  
A LONG GLOWING TAIL  
OF LIGHT...



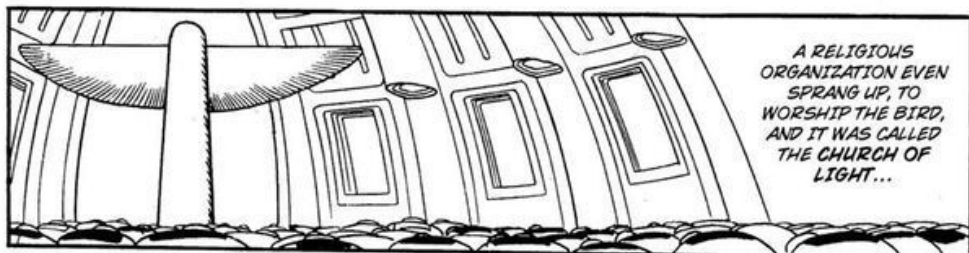
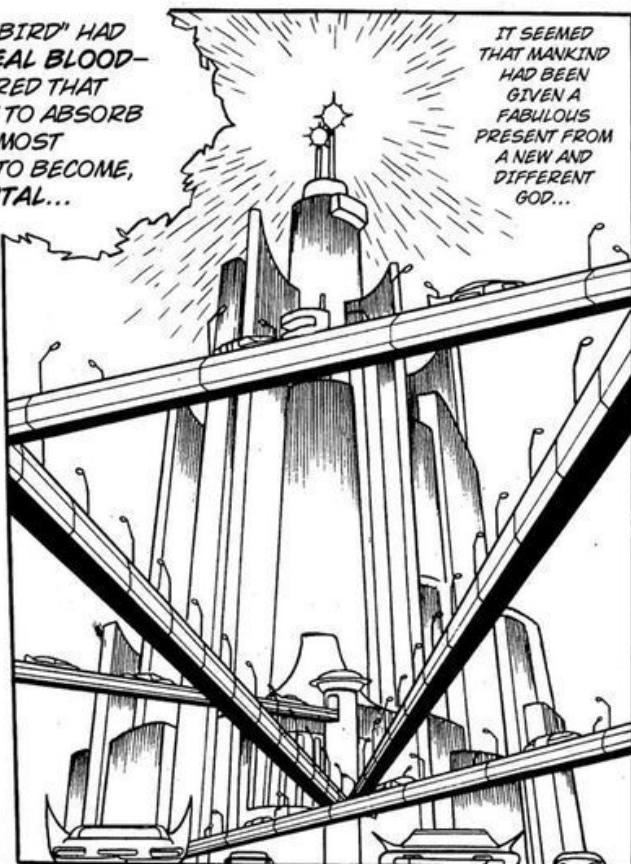


AT ANY RATE,  
THE BIRD  
APPROACHED  
THEM, AND—  
AS IMPOSSIBLE  
AS IT MAY  
SOUND—ENTERED  
THE SHIP ITSELF.



AMAZINGLY, THE "FIRE BIRD" HAD  
BLOOD IN ITS VEINS—REAL BLOOD—  
AND OTOMO DISCOVERED THAT  
DRINKING IT WAS A WAY TO ABSORB  
THE UNIVERSE'S MOST  
FUNDAMENTAL ENERGY—TO BECOME,  
IN EFFECT, IMMORTAL...

IT SEEMED  
THAT MANKIND  
HAD BEEN  
GIVEN A  
FABULOUS  
PRESENT FROM  
A NEW AND  
DIFFERENT  
GOD...



A RELIGIOUS  
ORGANIZATION EVEN  
SPRANG UP, TO  
WORSHIP THE BIRD,  
AND IT WAS CALLED  
THE CHURCH OF  
LIGHT...



NONE OTHER  
THAN OTOMO  
BECAME THE  
SUPREME  
LEADER OF  
THE CHURCH  
OF LIGHT...



THOSE WHO BELIEVED IN THIS NEW FAITH BECAME MEMBERS. THOSE WHO DID NOT WERE TREATED AS OUTCASTS, AND REFERRED TO AS MEMBERS OF A "SHADOW" WORLD...



ON ORDER OF THE "CHURCH OF LIGHT" THEY WERE PERSECUTED, AND BANISHED FROM REGULAR SOCIETY.



AS IF THIS WERE NOT ENOUGH, ALL OF THE NON-BELIEVERS—THE SHADOW PEOPLE—WERE FORCED TO LIVE UNDERGROUND, NEVER TO SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY AGAIN...



THESE  
OUTCASTS  
INHABITED A  
MISERABLE  
WORLD...

...A WORLD  
CALLED  
"SHADOW  
LAND"...

AND THERE IS  
ONE MORE THING  
I MUST TELL  
YOU, SUGURU...  
OTOMO IS  
ACTUALLY MY  
NEPHEW...



AFTER  
BANISHING  
ME, HE  
DECLARED  
HIMSELF A  
"LIVING  
GOD"...

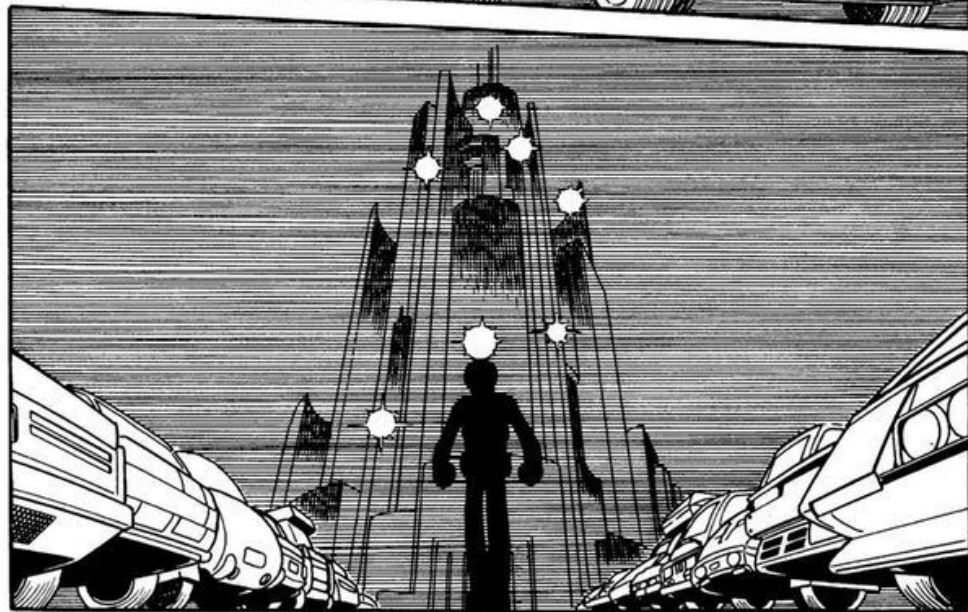
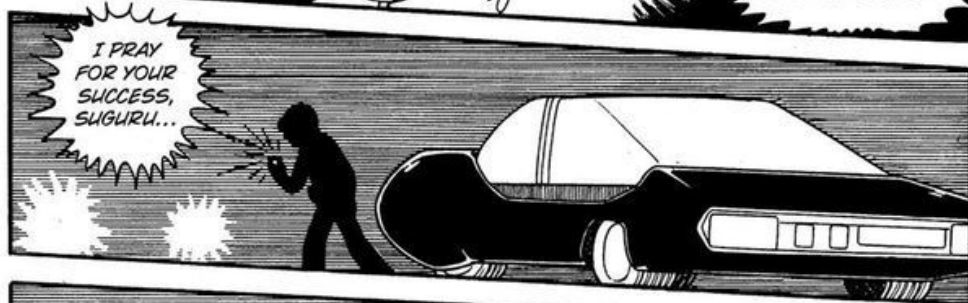
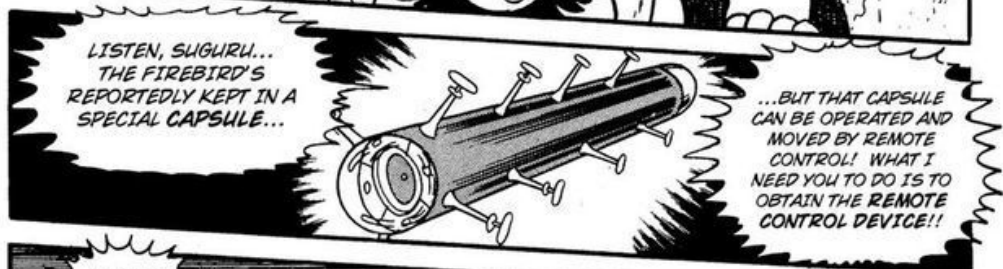
A GOD?!  
HE CALLED  
HIMSELF  
A GOD?!

B...BUT  
ORDINARY  
PEOPLE CAN'T  
BE GODS!

TH...  
THAT'S  
RIDI-  
CULOUS!

I'M JUST  
SPECULATING, OF  
COURSE, BUT BY THEN  
OTOMO MAY HAVE  
ALREADY DRUNK THE  
FIREBIRD'S BLOOD  
AND ATTAINED  
IMMORTALITY...

HE MAY  
ACTUALLY  
BELIEVE  
THAT HE HAS  
BECOME A  
GOD...









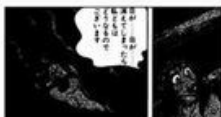
TO BE CONTINUED IN PHOENIX VOLUME 11: SUN PART 2

# A Journey through Time and Space: An Overview of the Complete *Phoenix* Saga

The complete *Phoenix* saga is a story about mankind that features a historical-narrative structure unlike anything that has come before it. The first volume depicts the dawn of civilization. The second volume jumps to the far future. The setting for the third story shifts back to early history, and so on, back and forth, from past to future; the amplitude decreases as past and future converge to meet in the present.

## Dawn (1967) 240-270 A.D.

The era of Queen Himiko of the Yamatai Koku. The work quotes from the accounts of the *Gishiwajinden*. Also uses accounts from the legend of Jinmu Tousei.



The scene in the Amano Iwato myth where Himiko

compares herself to Amaterasu-Omikami and a solar eclipse occurs.

## Yamato (1968-69) 320-350 A.D.

Based on the legend of Yamato-takeru-no-mikoto. The dates above were inferred from the account of Old Man Takeru, and from information in Dawn.



Disguised as a woman, Prince Yamato Ogura approaches the Chieftain of the Kumaso and stabs him. As told in the Kiki myth, the prince gets the name "Takeru" from his opponent right before he dies.

## Karma (Hou-ou) (1969-70) 720-752 A.D.

The complicated drama of the spirit of two Buddhist sculptors. Set in the Nara Period (710-794) during the national enterprise of the construction of the Great Buddha. Here, the Hou-ou (a Chinese myth) is the Phoenix.



Akanemaru, who has been ordered by the authorities to be in charge of the construction and design of the Great Buddha, is shocked when the statue sheds tears. The workers become frightened, and the bizarre phenomenon halts construction.

## Robe of Feathers (1971) 937-941 A.D.



The spirit of a fisherman is bewitched by the beauty of the woman and he hides her clothes...

A sci-fi version of the Hagoromo Legend of Miho no Matsubara in Enshu (modern day Shizuoka). Set during Taira no Masakado's rebellion which occurred during the Heian Period (898-1185).

The spirit of a woman swimming in the ocean is captured by the beauty of the white sand and green pine.

## Civil War (1978-80) 1172-1189 A.D.

The time of the Genpei Kassen (War between the Taira and the Genji) after the fall of the Heishi (Taira Clan). Using the *Heike Monogatari* and *Gikeiki* as a backdrop, this story depicts "combat" as the fate of living things.



Kiso Yoshinaka defeats the Heishi and takes control of the capital. He cuts down the famous monk Myoun. He came to the capital because he is after the Phoenix.

## Strange Beings (1981) 1468-1498 A.D.

The Sengoku Period (1482-1558). Sakonnosuke, the heir of General Yagi Iemasa, cuts down the nun, Yaobikuni, who seems to be 800 years old. But she doesn't realize the true relationship between herself and the nun.

The banner bearer is saying that "now" is the beginning of the Sengoku Wars and they are in the middle of the Onin Rebellion. In other words, they are in a time before Sakonnosuke was born!



## Sun (1986-88) 663-672 A.D.

The story begins after the defeat of the Japan-Kudara alliance at Hakusukinoe and Japan's withdrawal from the Korean peninsula, and ends with the struggle for the imperial throne during the Jinshin Rebellion.



Emperor Kobun, formerly called Otomo no Miko, is the cousin of Takachi no Miko, who is the son of Oama no Miko.

PAST

# FUTURE

## Future (1967-68) 3404 A.D.-infinity

The end of the future. Mankind is in decline and has become very conservative. The earth is run down and faces devastation. Eventually a nuclear war breaks out causing the end of everything.

The Yamato Central Main Building Megalopolis. Yamato is one of the five remaining underground cities of mankind.



## Universe (1969) 2577 A.D.

In Orion, a sub-light speed rocket heading towards Earth crashes into a meteorite. The ship becomes unable to fly and four people manage to escape, including Saruta and Nana.

Each of the passengers escapes in an individual escape pod. However, the pods only have enough food for half a year and enough air for a year and a half. Possibilities of survival are...



## Resurrection (1970-71) 2482-3344 A.D.

In the year 3344, Prof. Saruta lands on the moon. He meets and acquires Robita in his final form. Spanning 860 years, the end of this episode goes beyond *Universe* and close to the beginning of *Future*.

Robita and this rocket also make appearances in *Future*, where Robita stops Rock and then gets shot by him.



## Nostalgia (1976-78) Indeterminate (approx. 25th century)

A Japanese woman named Romy establishes a civilization and history for the formerly uninhabited planet, Eden-17. Her husband dies an unnatural death, but the life she carries inside her...



The spaceship is headed for Eden-17. The shiny object in the foreground is its sun. The planet is surrounded by a revolving ring of space dust held there by gravity.

## Life (1980) 2155-2170 A.D.

Human clones are being created, all for high ratings and a public-killing TV game show called *Clone Man Hunt*.

Animal clones were created for food. Human clones are created for a TV show—the cloning company president speaks as a sponsor. A terrifying plan for a TV show!



## Sun (1986-88) 2008 A.D.

The "Light Tribe" acquires the Phoenix in space. However, they turn it into an icon and come to control society through religion. Non-believers are called "shadows" and are chased out to live underground.

The head temple of the "Light Tribe." A young shadow boy named Suguru endeavors to climb the great tower and steal the Phoenix.



# ABOUT THIS EDITION OF PHOENIX: SUN, PART 1

The Jinshin Rebellion occurred in the year 672, just after the death of Emperor Tenji, and as most people are aware, there are various explanations for the uprising. Some say it began with the local nobles who felt mistreated and abused when the emperor moved the capital to Omi.

In this work, I offer my own, completely subjective explanation for what may have caused the greatest rebellion in ancient times, by asking what role Buddhism played in these events. One of the protagonists in the *Phoenix* series is a man named Sarutahiko (or Hiko Saruta). As Japanese readers know, Sarutahiko is also the name of a famous deity in Japanese mythology, and he is a home-grown deity, as opposed to ones later imported from abroad. In my story, I have depicted Saruta as a special spirit, who is a protector of the land, and he thus represents the ancient Japanese (Shinto-based) belief in local deities.

In ancient Japan, most people lived in small groups or villages and their faiths revolved around shamanism and sun worship. They were thus governed by very simple beliefs, in which people and their gods enjoyed a close relationship with one another. When Buddhism made its entry into this setting, it represented a very modern and different culture.

Buddhism came to Japan from abroad, barely one hundred years before the events depicted in this story. A variety of people, including the Korean Wani (or Wang'in), helped bring Buddhism to Japan, where it was initially linked to the ruling elite. The imperial and aristocratic families began to build temples and adopted Buddhism as their official religion.

Because the authorities were the ones promoting Buddhism in those days, it is easy to imagine the speed and effectiveness with which it must have spread. But it is equally easy to imagine

the resistance the indigenous Aino and other animists must have put up in defending their belief in the local spirits of the land.

Religious conflicts present the most difficult problems for any culture. As a result, I am sure there must have been clans and villages that resisted the invasion of modern culture as represented by Buddhist teachings. And those clans and villages probably also rebelled against the authorities, who were using Buddhist teachings as a way to gain political advantage.

In *Phoenix*, Prince Oama (the future Emperor Tenmu) warns his brother, Emperor Tenji, that forbidding the worship of traditional shamanistic deities and protective family spirits will only create trouble with the non-aristocratic clans. But Emperor Tenji refuses to listen. As a result, ill feelings develop between the two, and the frustrations of the nobles eventually come to a head, with the emperor at the center of the explosion. In this volume of *Phoenix* I have incorporated my own, very subjective opinion: that the root cause of the Jinshin Rebellion was actually the social stresses created by the importation of Buddhism.

October 1986